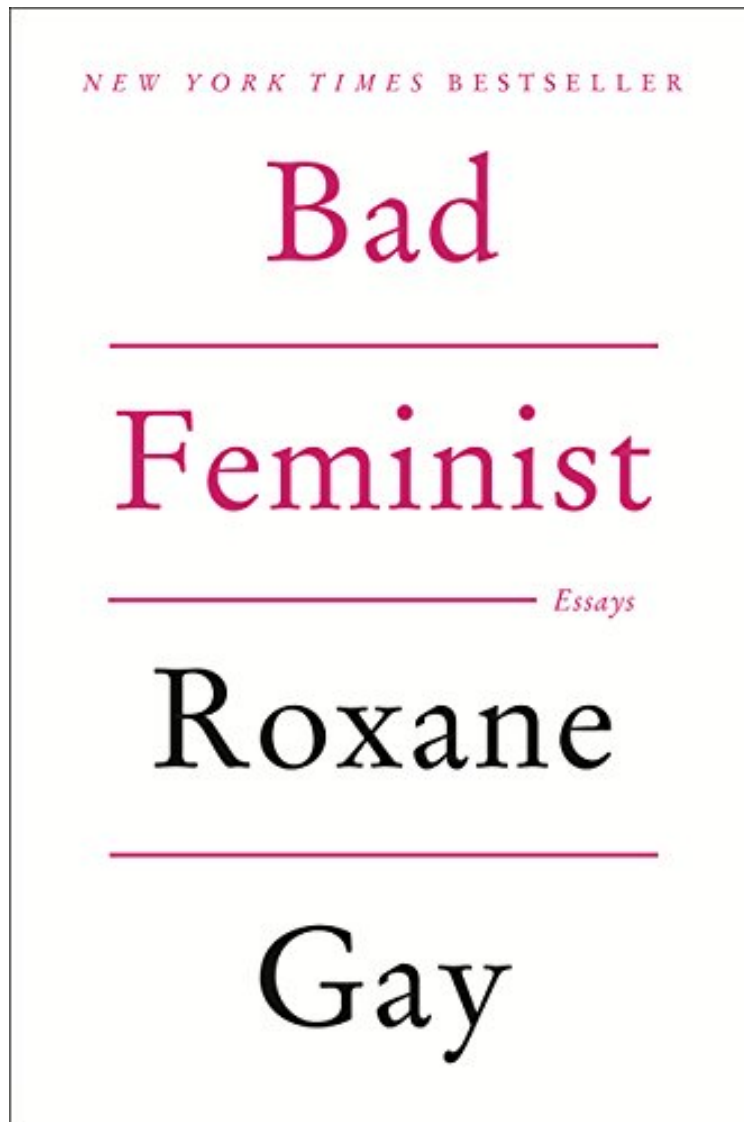


Bad Feminist: Essays

Roxane Gay

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Roxane Gay : Bad Feminist: Essays before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bad Feminist: Essays:

54 of 57 people found the following review helpful. It's always a struggle to find that perfect feminist stance. By C. Erickson I didn't know what to expect when opening a book entitled, Bad Feminist. I certainly didn't expect to read about Gay's devotion to the Sweet Valley High book series, or her obsession with competitive Scrabble, or her enjoyment of the Hunger Games books despite their literary pitfalls. She offers these reflections alongside essays lamenting violence against women and the LGBT community, and the depressing persistence of rape culture and

racism. The latter essays tend to be gritty, factual, intensely-layered with a complex and nuanced perspective; they showcase her ability to imbibe culture in all its forms—media, news, movies, literature—and lay it out for us to see, think about, and agree or disagree with. In one notable essay, *The Solace of Preparing Fried Foods and Other Quaint Remembrances from 1960s Mississippi: Thoughts on The Help*, Gay bemoans the ever-lingering trope of the magical negro and its presence in movies and popular literature. She writes: In *The Help*, there are not one but twelve or thirteen magical negroes who use their mystical powers to make the world a better place by sharing their stories of servitude and helping Eugenia Skeeter Phelan grow out of her awkwardness and insecurity into a confident, racially aware, independent career woman. It's an embarrassment of riches for fans of the magical negro trope (Pg. 210). When I read this, other movies came to mind, such as *The Green Mile*, in which the person of color, John Coffey, significantly improves the lives of the white people in his life but doesn't save himself from being put to death by electrocution. Coffey brings animals back to life and sucks cancer from a white woman's body, accepting it not without distress and pain to his own person, and reassures the whites around him that he is ready to die, and in fact wants to die. Gay wishes for a day when people of color play characters other than a slave or a magical negro or a combination of the two; she wishes for a day when the script has a person of color performing significant acts for their own destiny and not for someone else. In a world where people think increasingly in absolutist claims, such as *We versus Them*, and use increasingly simplified and stunted language that can hardly do justice to the many ways life is lived, Gay's writing forces the reader to consider the infinite shades of gray that exist in the world beyond the black and white, and demands through her logic that people be allowed to thrive in a variety of lifestyles, modes, and cultures and be respected and loved despite religion, skin color, gender, chosen life paths, and level of so-called femininity. Isn't this book about being a bad feminist? Yes, but Gay's views of herself, what feminism means for her and what she thinks it should mean today are intertwined with her ruminations on literature and culture. There's not just one right way to be a feminist; there's the way of being who you are, plus feminism, and then you can be both, even if it doesn't quite fit in the lines of what the perceived perfect feminist might be (for instance, Gay likes the color pink). As if sighing at the end of a lengthy conversation, she says in her last essay: I am a mess of contradictions. We are all; yet few of us are strong enough to admit it.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Loved it! By Amanda L. Beachum
Wonderful, wonderful book! While feminism was the central theme of most of the essays, Roxane Gay shares her thoughts on everything from social media to pop culture to racism. I appreciated how she let us in on her thought process and didn't come across as arrogant or self-righteous. There were times when I was nodding my head and thinking, "Yes! I totally agree!" and other times where I was going, "No, no, no, no!" The point isn't whether or not you agree with her though. It's about all of these important things that come up in our culture that people spend a lot of time talking about but don't seem to spend a lot of time really thinking about. I would recommend this book to anyone, male or female, Republican or Democrat, self-labeled feminist or not. It's just a book that makes you think, and a well-written and engaging one at that.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Something you can feel
By J. Ross
I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I found it to be on point, relevant, I spoke to issues that are and have been poignant for women of all communities.

From the author of *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body*, the New York Times Bestseller and Best Book of the Year at NPR, the Boston Globe, Newsweek, and many more
A collection of essays spanning politics, criticism, and feminism from one of the most-watched young cultural observers of her generation, Roxane Gay.
Pink is my favorite color. I used to say my favorite color was black to be cool, but it is pink—all shades of pink. If I have an accessory, it is probably pink. I read *Vogue*, and I'm not doing it ironically, though it might seem that way. I once live-tweeted the September issue.
In these funny and insightful essays, Roxane Gay takes us through the journey of her evolution as a woman (Sweet Valley High) of color (*The Help*) while also taking readers on a ride through culture of the last few years (*Girls*, *Django in Chains*) and commenting on the state of feminism today (abortion, Chris Brown). The portrait that emerges is not only one of an incredibly insightful woman continually growing to understand herself and our society, but also one of our culture.
Bad Feminist is a sharp, funny, and spot-on look at the ways in which the culture we consume becomes who we are, and an inspiring call-to-arms of all the ways we still need to do better, coming from one of our most interesting and important cultural critics.

.com An Best Book of the Month, August 2014: "These essays are political and they are personal," Roxanne Gay announces in the introduction of *Bad Feminist*. "They are, like feminism, flawed, but they come from a genuine place." This place, as displayed throughout the course of her excellent essay collection, is also one of daring intelligence, imagination, and empathy. Gay leads by example. To combat the demeaning stereotype that feminists are humorless, Gay imbues her essays with levity. One of the best pieces comes early in the book when Gay competes in a Scrabble tournament and her success as a beginner angers her male opponents. It's smart and laugh-out-loud funny essay, and in a humbling turn, Gay herself finds a similar unwarranted frustration toward competitors when she begins losing. *Bad Feminist* represents Gay's body of personal essays and critical work over the past several years, and if the book has a slight misstep, it's that it sometimes feels like these are articles that have been published elsewhere. (For

example, Gay's takedown of *The Help* is extraordinary, but the same arguments return repeatedly in pieces about other films.) Still, this is such a small complaint in a rare collection where each and every piece is vital and the book as a whole feels important. --Kevin Nguyen A strikingly fresh cultural critic. (Ron Charles, *Washington Post*) Arresting and sensitive. . . . An author who filters every observation through her deep sense of the world as fractured, beautiful, and complex. (Slate)[A] touching and crucial essay collection. . . . If you're interested in critical thinking about culture, this book is a must. (Newsweek) Roxane Gay is the brilliant girl-next-door: your best friend and your sharpest critic. . . . She is by turns provocative, chilling, hilarious; she is also required reading. (People) Roxane Gay applies her discerning eye to everything from Paula Deen to *The Bachelor*. (Marie Claire) Feisty, whip-smart essays on gender, sexuality, and race. (Entertainment Weekly) One of our sharpest new culture critics plants her flag in topics ranging from trigger warnings to *Orange Is the New Black* in this timely collection of essays. (O, the Oprah Magazine, 10 Titles to Pick Up Now) A trenchant collection. . . . Whatever her topic, Gays provocative essays stand out for their bravery, wit, and emotional honesty. (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) Toss Roxane Gays collection of witty, thoughtful essays, *Bad Feminist* into your tote bag. With musings on everything from Sweet Valley High to the color pink, Gay explores the idea of being a feminist, even when you're full of contradictions. (Self, "Smart beach-read alert") Gays essays are consistently smart and provocative. . . . Her essay collection will give you dinner-party conversation through September. (Jennifer Weiner's 10 best beach reads, USA Today) An assortment of comical, yet astute essays that touch on Gays personal evolution as a woman, popular culture throughout the recent past, and the state of feminism today. (Harper's Bazaar) Roxane Gay may call herself a bad feminist but she is a badass writer. . . . Reading *Bad Feminist* is like having a fascinating (one-way) conversation with an extremely smart, well-read, funny and thoughtful party guest. Here's hoping we have another encounter soon. (Associated Press) Roxane Gay is the gift that keeps on giving. . . . An entertaining and thought-provoking essay collection. (Time) *Bad Feminist* collects the very good essays of It girl culture critic Roxane Gay. (Vanity Fair, Hot Type) Fascinating. . . . An important and pioneering contemporary writer . . . Readers will immediately understand the appeal of Gays intimate and down-to-earth voice. . . . An important contribution to the complicated terrain of gender politics. (Boston Globe) Alternately friendly and provocative, wry and serious, her takes on everything from *Girls* to *Fifty Shades of Grey* help to recontextualize what feminism is--and what it can be. (Time Out New York) Roxane Gay is so great at weaving the intimate and personal with what is most bewildering and upsetting at this moment in culture. She is always looking, always thinking, always passionate, always careful, always right there. (Sheila Heti, author of *How Should a Person Be?*) With prodigious bravery and eviscerating humor, Roxane Gay takes on culture and politics in *Bad Feminist*--and gets it right, time and time again. We should all be lucky enough to be such a bad feminist. (Ayelet Waldman, author of *Love and Treasure* and *Bad Mother*) Smart readers cannot afford to miss these essays, which range from socially significant art (*Girls*, *Django in Chains*) and feminist issues (abortion) to politics (Chris Brown) and why Gay likes pink. (Library Journal) Pre-order it, put it on the library hold list, whatever. Just get ready to read it and quote it and share it and be challenged by it. (Book Riot) There are writers who can show you the excellence of their brains and writers who show you the depths of their souls: I don't know any writer who does both at the same time as brilliantly as Roxane Gay. (Elizabeth McCracken, author of *Thunderstruck* Other Stories) Trailblazing. (Salon) Praise Roxane Gay for her big-hearted self-examining intelligence, for her inclusive and forgiving stance, for her courage and determination . . . for saying out loud the things we were thinking, for guiding us back to ourselves and returning to us what was ours all along. (Pam Houston, author of *Contents May Have Shifted*) She had me at Sweet Valley High. Gay playfully crosses the borders between pop culture consumer and critic, between serious academic and lighthearted sister-girl, between despair and optimism, between good and bad. . . . How can you help but love her? (Melissa Harris-Perry, Wake Forest Professor and MSNBC host) As *Bad Feminist* proves, Gay is a necessary and brave voice when it comes to figuring out all the crazy mixed messages in our mixed-up world. ("20 New Nonfiction Books That Will Make You Smarter," Flavorwire) Gay writes with probing intelligence about pop-culture topics from the morality of Tyler Perry to how much the Sweet Valley High books mattered to her. (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel) *Bad Feminist* places pop culture under her sharp, often hilarious, always insightful microscope. (GQ.com) A collection of sharp, Sontag-ianly searing pieces on everything from *Orange Is the New Black* to likability in fiction to abortion legislation. . . . Her pieces manage to be at once conversational and full of pithy aphorisms. (The L Magazine) Gay is poised to hit the big time. (Nylon Magazine) As a feminist who has been around a while I have a message for these girls: it's okay you can skip the rigors of Betty Friedan and Andrea Dworkin and go straight to Roxane Gay, where feminism is not just friendly, but more relevant than ever. (Erika Schickel, Los Angeles of Books) What's so special about this collection is its accessibility - Gay is nothing short of a critical genius, yet every essay is approachable and open while still being thorough. Her writing is rare, and at that, not to be missed. (Bustle) I'm pretty sure Gay is incapable of writing anything boring. . . . Even better: It's an essay collection, so you can parse it out, maybe save a couple for days when the Internet is particularly infuriating. (Jezebel) With trenchant thoughts on Sweet Valley High, *The Help*, abortion, and Chris Brown, Gay isn't really a bad feminist, just an uncommonly entertaining one. (Vulture, "8 Books You Need to Read This August") A meaty volume of personal essays and criticism from one of the great storytellers and smartest cultural observers out there. . . . Gay is as critical and as she is admiring. That balance is what actually

makes these essays so enjoyable and honest. (Feministing.com)One of the liveliest, most joy-inducing books of the year. . . . Bad Feminist is a tour de force and Roxane Gay is a writer of considerable power, intelligence and moral acuity. (Huffington Post)Bad Feminist is a broad, compelling book. . . . Its a book that feels like it needed to be out in the world . . . a book that feels vital, alive, and engaged with the world, and we need more writers as passionate as Roxane Gay. (Flavorwire)Powerful, and its winsomeness is due entirely to Gays fearless, inclusive and accessible prose. (Shelf Awareness)Read Bad Feminist to feel good about reading Vogue. (New York Magazine, "Approval Matrix: Highbrow and Brilliant")Gays writing is thoughtful and funny, compassionate and bold, and shes just as likely to discuss Sweet Valley High as Django Unchained or Judith Butler. (Refinery29)Gays essays expertly weld her personal experiences with broader gender trends occurring politically and in popular culture. (Huffington Post)What makes Bad Feminist such a good read isnt only Gays ability to deftly weave razor-sharp pop cultural analysis and criticism with a voice that is both intimate and relatable. Its that shes incapable of blindly accepting any kind of orthodoxy. (San Francisco Chronicle)Blunt and funny. . . . [Gay acknowledges] I am a mass of contradictions. For Gay, though, these contradictions are less a condition to be remedied than a source of greater strength. (Washington Post)A prolific and exceptionally insightful writer. . . . Bad Feminist doesnt show us how Gay should be, but something much better: how Roxane Gay actually is. . . . Gay unquestionably succeeds at leading us in her way. (Globe and Mail (Toronto))I know there are still four and a half months left, but Im calling it now: 2014 is the year of Roxane Gay. I just devoured her book, Bad Feminist . . . Amazing. (Rookie)Incisive, self-aware, risky, and often funny, the authors writing is reminiscent of Nora Ephrons 1975 collection of feminist essays, Crazy Salad. . . . Gay possesses a distinct perspective and singular voice. (Library Journal)A thoughtful and often hilarious new collection of essays. (Chicago Tribune)[Gays] energetic and thought-provoking first essay collection will become as widely read as other generation-defining works, like Nora Ephrons Crazy Salad and Joan Morgans When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost. (Essence)Roxane Gay delivers sermons that read like easy conversations. Bad Feminist is an important collection of prose that matters to those still trying to find their voice. (Ebony)Honest and warm. She takes a close, scathing look at modern music and film. . . . I believe her essay collection will open a lot of eyes and inspire women of all ages to stand and speak up. (SheKnows.com)Its no surprise that Roxane Gay - author, essayist and sharp observer of everything in pop culture were supposed to be too cool to like - has written such a winning book. . . . Perfectly imperfect, Gay is an unforgettable voice, coming at just the right time. (NPR, Best Books of 2014)As a culture critic, Gay has X-ray eyes. Her writing is smart and trenchant . . . Shes disarming and one of us, only smarter. She has a tumblr and she writes about Internet dating. We love her, you know? (Philadelphia Inquirer)Above all, Gay disabuses the stereotype of a humorless feminist, writing in a voice thats fresh, funny and always accessible. (Sacramento News)Roxane Gay offers an unique (and often biting) perspective on pop culture. (Miami Herald)Gay offers a complex and multifarious feminism to answer the movements ongoing PR issues, its flaws and its failures. . . . Bad Feminist surveys culture and politics from the perspective of one of the most astute critics writing today. (Boston)Rip-roaringly funny and insightful essays. (PureWow.com)Roxane Gay and her new book Bad Feminist are here to save us all. . . . Its a swift read with some serious substance. . . . GET TO KNOW HER ALREADY. (xoJane.com)Roxane Gays ability to write so clearly about complex issues is truly impressive. Her essays about feminism, race, and class are hilarious, moving, and yes, educational, but never in a way that feels tired or boring. (Cosmopolitan, "28 Life-Changing Books Every Woman Should Read")The book is powerful, and its winsomeness is due entirely to Gays fearless, inclusive and accessible prose. (Shelf Awareness, Best Books of the Year)Gays writing is as accessible as it is sharp. . . . In the volume of essays, Gay mixes the personal, the political and the pop cultural with unashamed acknowledgement that the three are interrelated and often inseparable. (Indianapolis Business Journal)[Gay is] hilarious. But she also confronts more difficult issues of race, sexual assault, body image, and the immigrant experience. She makes herself vulnerable and its refreshing. (Tanvi Misra, Atlantic, "The Best Book I Read This Year")Bad Feminist is often LOL funny but continuously ruthless. (San Antonio Express-News)Gays insightful exploration of this topic makes readers worry less about their occasional shortcomings and more comfortable with being human. (BookPage)Entertaining and enlightening. . . . Bad Feminist is an outtake of her wisdom, and we would all do well to take heed. (Bitch Magazine)There has never been a book quite like Bad Feminista sometimes funny, sometimes serious pop-culture-literary-nonfiction-social-commentary hybrid written by a black woman in America. (The Root)Gay, who has become one of our most provocative essayists, leaves nothing off the table in her debut collection . . . Taken in whole, Bad Feminist is a brave affirmation of selfhood: I am a woman, this is my story, and there is power in its telling. (Gawker, "The Best Books to Give This Holiday Season: A Bookseller's Guide")Roxane Gays Bad Feminist hardly needs more praise, but no other book speaks more eloquently, or more directly, about todays most crucial issues. . . . Gays essays are intimate and accessible, but broad in scope and deep in insight. (Celeste Ng, "Writers favorite books of 2014," San Francisco Gate)If youre in the mood to read wonderful, thought-provoking essays that feel like theyre written by your best friend, check out Bad Feminist. . . . Gay puts you at ease as she shakes the foundations of what you believe. (Buzzfeed, Sami Main, "28 Best Books by Women in 2014")From the Back CoverOne of our most indispensable writers . . . on everything that matters