

Men Explain Things to Me

Rebecca Solnit

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Rebecca Solnit : Men Explain Things to Me before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Men Explain Things to Me:

397 of 422 people found the following review helpful. Some Thoughts On/For Conservative Readers By Ian I bought this book for my brother-in-law shortly after my sister gave birth to a daughter. I thought it would be a fun “Hey, you have a daughter, this might be a good thing to start thinking about”-type gift. And so he didn’t feel totally alone while reading it, I bought myself a copy as well. Solnit is clearly a powerful mind and talented writer. Her prose is strong and forceful, and she writes with stirring— at times contagious— conviction. The book’s most powerful essays (“Men

Explain Things To Me” and “#YesAllWomen”) are intelligent, clear-sighted looks at a massive, difficult, dangerous topic. It saddens me to applaud Solnit for her courage in writing this, if only because that acknowledges the typical backlash against women who speak out against misogyny, but she IS courageous and that alone warrants commendation. The book starts out with a funny, almost playful anecdote about being mansplained to by a pompous idiot at a party in Aspen, but then quickly moves into darker waters. Solnit goes on to use politics, art, history and new media as springboards for discussing the interconnectedness of cultural misogyny and how mansplaining and rape can be viewed as existing on a continuum. Towards the end of the book she summarizes this nicely: “It’s a slippery slope. That’s why we need to address the slope, rather than compartmentalizing the varieties of misogyny and dealing with them separately.” (p. 134) It’s a new way of looking at an ancient problem, articulated in a way that I don’t think I’ve heard before, and Solnit rounds out her case by anticipating counter arguments (i.e. men being falsely imprisoned for rape) and responding to them to the degree that they deserve. So here’s the part where I complain: While her arguments are culturally important and her writing is strong, Solnit’s rhetoric seems, at times, deliberately hyperbolic and meant to divide readers. On pg. 57 she describes the case of Ariel Castro, a man accused of imprisoning, torturing and sexually abusing three women as being “a vicious version of the traditional [marriage] arrangement.” Later on in the book (p. 153) she takes a similar swipe at capitalism: “There’s more that we need to be liberated from... a system that serves environmental destruction and limitless consumption...” And beyond that there’s a general celebration of revolution, (non-violent) anarchy, as well as Solnit’s insistence that this is, indeed, “a war.” In other words, if you’re traditional / conservative / old-fashioned, then chances are you’re probably going to feel pretty alienated while reading this, if not all out attacked. I don’t consider myself conservative, but there were still times when I felt myself getting defensive. With that said, I was less annoyed with this on ideological terms than I was by what felt like a tactical mis-step. Simply put: This is a wise book. This is an important book. A lot of people should be reading it and absorbing its message. And I could suddenly feel thousands of readers— good people who’s minds are ready to be expanded— fleeing from it’s very positive message, because they were being lumped in with rapists and murderers. I was frustrated because I felt like the book was preaching to the choir and, in-so-doing, entrenching conservatives deeper into their current belief systems. One could argue that this book isn’t intended to convert and so it’s unfair to judge it by those standards; that it’s a celebration and reminder of what’s already been accomplished in the fight for gender equality, and that now it’s up to someone else to write the gentler, more palatable book that eases *The Other Side* into progressive thinking. And you know what— that may very well be the case. In the meantime, I encourage conservative thinkers who are interested in reading this to do so with an open mind instead of just looking for things to disagree with. Because the fact of the matter is that the vast majority of what’s discussed in this book really has nothing to do with superficial left / right politics and everything to do with how we want our nieces/daughters to be treated as they grow up in the world. And that feels like something we can all agree on. 461 of 501 people found the following review helpful. Ladies, read this one on a train, at a park, anywhere in public. By AOL I’ve read this essay and others by Solnit all prior to their inclusion in this slim little tome with the exactly right-sized lettering on its cover. I am hugely adoring of her writing, so this review is less about the essays themselves (all fantastic) than the fact that it is a discrete volume you can, and should, be toting around in public. Ladies, read it on the subway. Two nights ago I was coming home from a lovely summer’s walk to a favorite bookstore, where I snapped up the book. I took it out of my bag at 10:30 p.m. on a sublime Saturday night in New York, on the G train. I was standing, but a Latina woman with her daughter on her lap craned her neck to try see the title of the book. Next to her, two other women who seemed to be out on the town for the night, were whispering to each other, “what does it say?” The Latina woman cocked her head further and spoke up, “Men Explain Things...” I spun on my heel and showed off the cover. “Men Explain Things to Me. It’s great.” “What is it about?” asked one of the women out on the town. I could tell by the tilt of her eyebrow that she thought its premise was dubious. She did not want Things Explained to her. I scooped over to where they were sitting, and gave them a short precis of the essay’s key narrative moment, closing with: “and you ladies know what she’s talking about right? Has that ever happened to you?” “Mmm-HMM.” “You know it has.” And a few little cheers and murmurs erupted from the half-dozen women in the train car. We all smiled. I went back to the book, and the women who were out on the town started talking about how Frankie was doing the exact same thing last week, and had no idea what he was talking about. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An important book. The first two essays in particular ... By Paul T. Corrigan An important book. The first two essays in particular are monumental-- about the small (micro) and the extreme abuses women so often face.

“This slim book—seven essays, punctuated by enigmatic, haunting paintings by Ana Teresa Fernandez—hums with power and wit.”—Boston Globe “The antidote to mansplaining.”—The Stranger “Feminist, frequently funny, unflinchingly honest and often scathing in its conclusions.”—Salon “Solnit tackles big themes of gender and power in these accessible essays. Honest and full of wit, this is an integral read that furthers the conversation on feminism and contemporary society.”—San Francisco Chronicle Top Shelf “Solnit [is] the perfect writer to tackle the subject: her prose style is so clear and cool.”—The New Republic “The terrain has always felt familiar, but *Men Explain Things To Me* is a tool that we all need in order to find something that was almost lost.”—National Post In her comic, scathing

essay, "Men Explain Things to Me," Rebecca Solnit took on what often goes wrong in conversations between men and women. She wrote about men who wrongly assume they know things and wrongly assume women don't, about why this arises, and how this aspect of the gender wars works, airing some of her own hilariously awful encounters. This updated edition with two new essays of this national bestseller book features that now-classic essay as well as "#YesAllWomen," an essay written in response to 2014 Isla Vista killings and the grassroots movement that arose with it to end violence against women and misogyny, and the essay "Cassandra Syndrome." This book is also available in hardcover. Writer, historian, and activist Rebecca Solnit is the author of eighteen or so books on feminism, western and indigenous history, popular power, social change and insurrection, wandering and walking, hope and disaster, including the books *Men Explain Things to Me* and *Hope in the Dark*, both also with Haymarket; a trilogy of atlases of American cities; *The Faraway Nearby*; *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster*; *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*; *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*; and *River of Shadows*, Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West (for which she received a Guggenheim, the National Book Critics Circle Award in criticism, and the Lannan Literary Award). A product of the California public education system from kindergarten to graduate school, she is a columnist at Harper's and a regular contributor to the Guardian.

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