



Girl Squads: 20 Female Friendships That Changed History

Sam Maggs (Illustrator) , Jenn Woodall

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A modern girl is nothing without her squad of besties. But don't let all the hashtags fool you: the #girlsquad goes back a long, long time. In this hilarious and heartfelt book, geek girl Sam Maggs takes you on a tour of some of history's most famous female BFFs, including:

- Anne Bonny and Mary Read, the infamous lady pirates who sailed the seven seas and plundered with the best of the men
- Jeanne Manon Roland and Sophie Grandchamp, Parisian socialites who landed front-row seats (from prison) to the French Revolution
- Sharon and Shirley Firth, the First Nations twin sisters who would go on to become Olympic skiers and break barriers in the sport
- The Edinburgh Seven, the band of pals who fought to become the first women admitted to medical school in the United Kingdom
- The Zohra Orchestra, the ensemble from Afghanistan who defied laws, danger, and threats to become the nation's first all-female musical group

And many more! Spanning art, science, politics, activism, and even sports, these girl squads show just how essential female friendship has been throughout history and throughout the world. Sam Maggs brings her signature wit and warmth as she pays tribute to the enduring power of the girl squad. Fun, feisty, and delightful to read—with empowering illustrations by artist Jenn Woodall—it's the perfect gift for your BFF.

Girl Squads: 20 Female Friendships That Changed History Details

Date : Published October 2nd 2018 by Quirk Books

ISBN : 9781683690726

Author : Sam Maggs (Illustrator) , Jenn Woodall

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Feminism, History, Sequential Art, Graphic Novels

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From Reader Review *Girl Squads: 20 Female Friendships That Changed History* for online ebook

Rachel says

This book was absolutely phenomenal. I love books that bright light to the women who have impacted history, because they are so often left out of history books. Women have always been active participants and change makers in our world, but their contributions have often been actively overlooked, erased, or ignored. Books like *Girl Squads* show us that all we have to do to discover the amazing women changing the world is to look.

Girl Squads tells the stories of twenty groups of women from ancient times up to modern day whose friendships and contributions have profoundly impacted their community, culture, or the world. From female athletes paving the way for future generations and artists breaking barriers to politicians fighting for equality and scientists making incredible breakthroughs. Of all the incredible groups of women in this book, there were only a few I was familiar with beforehand. But each and every one of them led fascinating and incredible lives that deserve to be told. I'm so glad that Sam Maggs is telling their stories.

In addition to telling the stories of these important women, and celebrating the incredible power of female friendship, this book is also just so much dang fun. Sam Maggs' writing style is casual and conversational, often breaking into asides and peppering in slang in a way that really brings the stories to life. I loved that this book could make me laugh even while recounting some tough women facing tough times. This is the kind of feminist book I want-- not glossing over the realities of the past, the sexism or the racism, while still feeling like a celebration of women working together to make change happen in the past and in the present.

Highly, highly recommend for anyone who feels female friendships deserve better representation in the media, wants to read more fun, feminist nonfiction, or just feels like reading a really great book about some incredible women.

Samantha Puc says

I received an advanced galley of *Girl Squads* through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. You can read that review in full on my blog, or read an excerpt below.

Give me a book that explores historical figures in short, illustrated essay format, and I'm so there. There are a number of books that do this really poorly, it's true, but the ones that get it right get it really, really right. Luckily, Sam Maggs' new book, *Girl Squads: 20 Female Friendships That Changed History*, illustrated by the incomparable Jenn Woodall, is one of the latter.

As someone who isn't a particularly dedicated student of history, I enjoy books like *Girl Squads* because they present historical figures in a digestible way that holds my interest. In this case, *Girl Squads* starts with "Athlete Squads", a section I didn't expect to love nearly as much as I did (because Sports are generally Not My Thing), then jumped into "Political & Activist Squads," followed by "Warrior Squads, then "Scientist Squads," then my personal favorite, "Artist Squads." Each section features essays written in Maggs'

informative-but-accessible style, showcasing the contributions of various women in history—and their teammates, siblings, friends, or any combination thereof—to their various areas of expertise.

...

I most enjoyed the essays about individual friendships, I think, but the historical research in this book has sparked my interest in a big way. I love how Maggs explores the connection between women who were actively friends and women who teamed up to fight for a common cause, even if their individual relationships weren't necessarily publicized or well-known. The balance of these different stories is great, and it makes the book flow really well.

The pacing of this book is absolutely fabulous; Maggs writes as if she's telling you a really interesting story at a party. I didn't want to put this book down and neither, I think, will you. Whether you're interested in history or just stories about badass women, check out *Girl Squads: 20 Female Friendships That Changed History*. I think you'll enjoy the read.

Beatrizmallow says

There's plenty of books about the forgotten women of history that are being published lately and this book is a part of that movement. It tells the stories of fantastic and heroic pioneer women in many fields: sports, science, arts...The main difference between this book and all other is that this doesn't focus on individual women but in what we would now call "squads", groups of women being awesome, breaking boundaries and helping each other. That was probably my favourite part of it was, in a world that keeps telling stories about women hating women it was a nice refreshment to see all those women lifting each other up. The book is written in an easy and fun tone and the reading experience is fun while formative. The illustrations are really great and fit the style of the book perfectly.

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own.

Angharad (Two Book Thieves) says

Full review [here!](#)

Sarah says

This book was so empowering and exciting. It was really cool to learn about different friendships around the world and across time. I've been really loving the female friendship trend out there lately so this book was perfect. Definitely recommend!

Thanks NetGalley for the advanced copy!

Shannon the Book Dragon says

A lovely collection of tales of beautiful friendships of real life women. I adore picking and choosing between sections I don't know much on and being able to learn about some amazing women I didn't know about before! It's a really inspiring read!

Kerri says

I'm obsessed with these stories, this writing and this book in general ??????

Julie says

This was fascinating. I'd heard of a few of them - there's a chapter about the women from Hidden Figures, with some details the movie missed - but most were new to me and they spanned all over history, from BCE to modern day. It was also a really diverse collection and an inspiring one, telling facts with occasional funny commentary and lots of mocking of the men who didn't believe in these women. It's voice-y, without being overpoweringly so, and informative, and it makes me think a lot about my own girl squads and what they mean and how we impact others. I read this pretty much in one sitting and it's one I can't wait to see teens fall in love with.

Jayni says

I loved this! it was so uplifting and empowering and something I think everyone, regardless of gender, should read because it follows the stories of so many women from so many different places all over the world during so many different time periods that literally everyone has the chance to gain some new perspective :-)

4.5/5 ?

Aria says

---- Disclosure: I received this book for free from Goodreads. ----

Nice cover. Bright, eye-catching, & full of activity. Great concept. Lots of potential in an idea like this. Content is full of short, easily-digestible stories, making it a nice book to digest as one's schedule allows. The 1st story about the divers totally drew me in. I was all set for this book to continue to be a winner, & I wanted it to be a success b/c books like this could potentially be gems for younger gals. After the initial story I had problems, though. I kept getting bored. Short tales or not, my mind was wandering before I could get through them. I skipped the last halves of the stories after the 2nd story (about the skiers), & just altogether skipped the final story in the section (the tennis one). I thought maybe I was just not connecting to the 1st section of the book, which was devoted to athletes. After all, I'm really not a sports fan.

Next section: Activists. "Now we're talkin'," I thought. It didn't get any better, though. I tried putting the book down & coming back to it a few times, but it was never again interesting to me after the initial story (about the divers). I tried to figure out why this was, b/c the subject matter was rife with interesting material for story-telling. I knew I wasn't sold on the writing style, & it bothered me somewhat, but I had been trying to look past that. (I tried really hard, even when the author tried to pull off a 2-word prepositional phrase as a stand alone sentence & every cell in my being revolted. I had to put the book down at that point before I set it on fire.) It's written in an effort that seems to be trying exceptionally hard to sound as if the author is talking to you, but I feel like that effort failed. (Ironically, the book I read following this one was written very successfully in that manner, so it's not like I am against the idea of that kind of delivery.)

I pressed on & found myself at pirates. Ooohhhhh. I like pirates. Wait. What's this? When discussing the motivation behind why the pirates did as they did: *"But they didn't do so out of some anarchist, sociopathic love of murder and mayhem."* Below, you will find a brief pictorial relating the barrage of emotions I very rapidly cycled through following the reading of that statement.

So, at that point I was done w/ this thing.

Besides things like starting sentences with conjunctions (see the quote above for reference), & trying to pass off prepositional phrases as sentences (we discussed this already), conflating "anarchy" with "chaos" is a serious pet peeve of mine. It is at the top of my peeve list (although, if I'm honest, it is most days tied w/ people who don't yield for traffic). Being that I had already made great effort to overlook the (many) issues I'd had trying to keep my head in this book & read it with the spirit it was obviously intended, I absolutely lost my shit as I read that sentence. I hate that it has come down to this point, but sadly, here we are just the same.

It's pretty simple.

More to the point:

To put it another way:

No one has to take my word for it, though. This bona fide smart person quite succinctly states the whole reason why false conflation of the two terms is such a problem. (Just F.Y.I., it existed to refer to the political philosophy long before malignant intentions began to confound it w/ the idea of chaos.)

Coming across this error in a book celebrating women really got under my skin, b/c the (long) history of the political philosophy of anarchy is riddled chock-full with some of the most bad-ass women one could ever hope to find. My personal favorite, Emma Goldman, publicly said things like this, back when women were still wearing hoop skirts, & child labor was seen as an unavoidable inevitability:

(She was deported for her efforts, of course.)

Confusing the work of liberation so many women thanklessly devoted their lives to with the “*sociopathic love of murder and mayhem*” in a book that was intended to celebrate women has obviously completely set me off. I’m just disappointed in the missed opportunity, b/c this really was a good idea for a nice book.

So, here we are. Now that I’ve attempted to explain myself w/o overly boring any dear reader who has stuck w/ me thus far, I will wrap this thing up. As I did not wish to be overly harsh, I waited some time to post my review. I wanted the opportunity to reassess the situation and come back to it. As stated, the premise was great, but the author’s voice was off-putting to me, regardless of content. Some of the people referenced in this book would be interesting for other authors to possibly flesh-out further into stand alone narratives. I mean, their tales are good stuff. That said, I should have enjoyed this more (before I got to the part that set me off on my above rant), so I can’t honestly say I was enjoying it at all after that initial story. It could have been great, but truthfully I just hated it.....& I hate that I hated it, but oh, well. I resented it for being so boring, for trying painfully hard to sound so chatty, & for failing to deliver interesting narratives about people who were (for the most part) actually pretty fascinating.

In fairness, I can only recommend this book to people looking for possible jumping off points re: women that might be worth writing full books about. Beyond that, it may unfortunately be another great idea that just didn’t quite land. I’ve no doubt if it were rearranged somehow, & done with a different voice, it’d be great. I also have no doubt that some people will love it as is. I can’t help walking away feeling that the women chosen as subjects in this book deserved a better presentation. There you have it, though. That’s where I’m at with it. Thanks for hangin’ in there with me. I’m done, now.

(Side note: The author herself seems really cool. So much so that I wanted to like this book in part just b/c I thought she seemed so interesting. Weird how things work out sometimes.)

Inge says

I love reading books about awesome women. *Bygone Badass BROADS*, *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls*, I devour them all. Reading these books is fun, educational, and empowering.

Girl Squads is no different. It tells twenty stories about historically amazing female friendships through five distinctive categories: sports, science, war, politics, and the arts. It's also incredibly diverse: from 90-year-old mermaids in Jeju to the first all-female orchestra in Afghanistan with a pit stop at the ladies of the US Supreme Court, this book covers it all.

Even though their own stories are brilliant on their own, I can't help but feel like every single one of these would make for some seriously great novel retellings. This book was fantastically fabulous and I'll gladly recommend it.

Thank you to NetGalley and Quirk Books for providing me with a copy

Kirstin (gryffindorkwinchester) says

I have had the opportunity to meet and see Sam Maggs speak a few times, and have loved her books in the

past! Sam truly is the epitome of a cool, feminist, nerd! She speaks inclusively and her books are validating and empowering and Girl Squads was no exception! This book focused on exactly how much is possible, when women come together to accomplish something! And it really showed how powerful we can be when women support women. Not to mention, the illustrations were totally adorable. I will surely be adding this intersectional collection to my shelves and would highly suggest it to anyone looking to learn a little bit about feminism and girl friendships.

cenninsbookreviews aka Book Dragon Queen says

Great, interesting, strong characters, fantastic variety of girl squads. Highly recommended. Thank you to both NetGalley and Quirk Books for giving me the opportunity to read 'Girl Squads' in exchange for my honest unbiased review.

Ellie (faerieontheshelf) says

This rolled up in the mail just as I finished The Lady's Guide to Petticoats and Piracy so I dropped right into it to continue my great adventure reading about badass women.

What's super cool is that some of these stories tied back into The Lady's Guide as Lee was inspired by some of the women featured here - the Edinburgh Seven, the female pirates, and so on.

A really solidly enjoyable read about badass women, most of whom I didn't know about before (which is sad ngl). I felt sometimes it was really colloquial and slang-y for me, but the target audience is teens so that's a deliberate choice.

Jenn says

DNF. The language here is too cutesy. Evidently this is written for preteens. Not for me.
