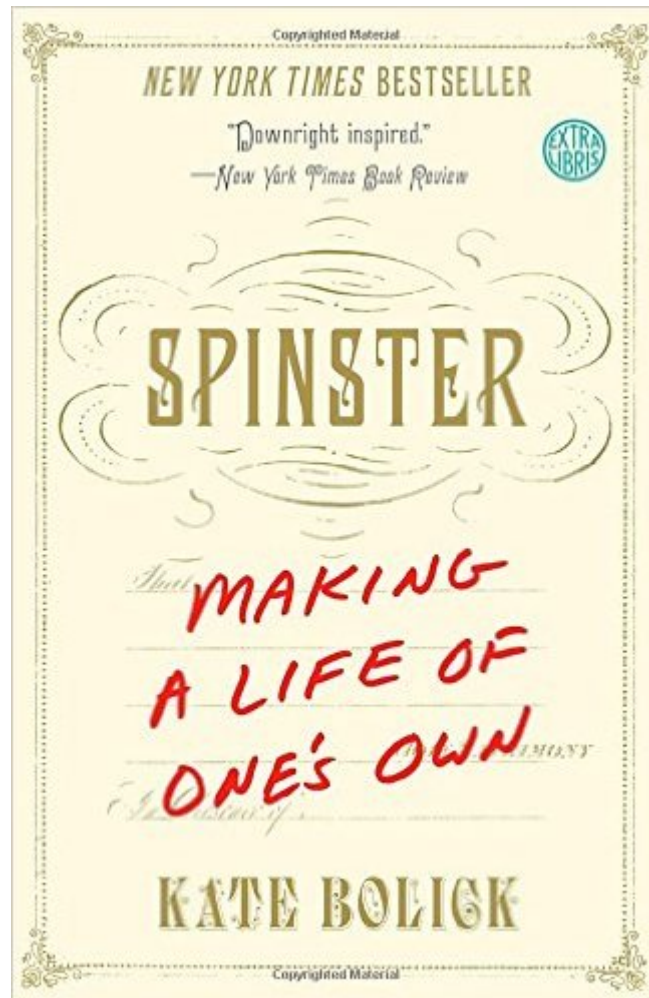


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# Spinster: Making A Life Of One's Own



## Synopsis

A New York Times Book ReviewÂ Notable Bookâ œWhom to marry, and when will it happenâ ”these two questions define every womanâ™s existence.â • So begins *Spinster*, a revelatory and slyly erudite look at the pleasures and possibilities of remaining single. Using her own experiences as a starting point, journalist and cultural critic Kate Bolick invites us into her carefully considered, passionately lived life, weaving together the past and present to examine whyÂ- sheâ ”along with over 100 million American women, whose ranks keep growingâ ”remains unmarried. This unprecedented demographic shift, Bolick explains, is the logical outcome of hundreds of years of change that has neither been fully understood, nor appreciated. *Spinster* introduces a cast of pioneering women from the last century whose genius, tenacity, and flair for drama have emboldened Bolick to fashion her life on her own terms: columnist Neith Boyce, essayist Maeve Brennan, social visionary Charlotte Perkins Gilman, poet Edna St. Vincent Millay, and novelist Edith Wharton. By animating their unconventional ideas and choices, Bolick shows us that contemporary debates about settling down, and having it all, are timelessâ ”the crucible upon which all thoughtful women have tried for centuries to forge a good life. Intellectually substantial and deeply personal, *Spinster* is both an unreservedly inquisitive memoir and a broader cultural exploration that asks us to acknowledge the opportunities within ourselves to live authentically. Bolick offers us a way back into our own livesâ ”a chance to see those splendid years when we were young and unencumbered, or middle-aged and finally left to our own devices, for what they really are: unbounded and our own to savor. From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

Okay. . . I'd give this book 5 stars for its readability. I picked it up and started reading and didn't want to put it down until I finished. That is unusual for me and a work of nonfiction. I also learned a lot about some historical figures I knew very little about and met some interesting new ones. Now, as far as to whether this book actually delivered? I'd have to give it 3 stars (and that is a bit generous). I found her point somewhat elusive. I'd be reading and thinking, "Yeah, yeah . . . okay, I get it," and a paragraph later or at the end of the page I'd have lost the thread. Or maybe I didn't lose the thread-- maybe I was looking for something more subtle or something more significant and it's not there. Maybe the point the point of the book really IS as simple as it seems: that marriage has historically been the focal point of women's lives to the detriment of their individual development. Well, huh. I am a female in her late 40s who does not have much patience for what I consider the unrealistic self-indulgent soft intellectualism that runs amok in a lot of women's studies programs. I also don't have much tolerance for the relentless pursuit of 'Me,' to the exclusion of all else -- something this book has in big doses. Sentences like those on the jacket " Spinster . . . . asks us to acknowledge the opportunities that exist within ourselves to live authentically" really set up my hackles. Just what the hell does that mean, anyhow? This is the kind of teeth-grinding hipster jargon that really makes me lose respect for an author. A good writer should do better than falling back on such pabulum and there are frequent instances of it throughout the book. When I read she'd been an editor at a fashion magazine that kind of writing made sense.

"When to marry, and when will it happen â “ these two questions define every woman's experience." This is the opening line of Kate Bolick's book SPINSTER. When I read it, I immediately wrote NO! in the margin of the book. And I grew up in the 50s in the South â “ not around Cambridge, Massachusetts where I live now, and where a diversity of lifestyles is the norm. Granted a majority of women probably did and still do dream of marriage, but it is certainly not every woman's (or girl's) experience, especially today."The single woman is nearly always considered an anomaly, an aberration from the social order," Bolick goes on to write. This too may have been true in the past, but recent statistics now indicate that the living situation of a married couple with children no longer comprise the majority of households and indeed is becoming an anomaly â “ although there are still some parts of the country in which a single woman is likely to feel very much alone and out of place. Despite the many criticisms I have of SPINSTER: MAKING A LIFE OF ONE'S OWN, and

although it is not at all what the book title led me to expect, I enjoyed reading it. What did I expect? A book about being an unmarried single woman for life (by choice or default) and dealing with advantages and disadvantages of not having a partner and intimate relationship central to one's life. Author Bolick only lightly touches on the above subject, whereas most of the book is a memoir about her hectic dating life (admittedly, she's usually super-social and doesn't allow herself much alone time) and above all, an explorations of the lives of five female writers of the past who inspired her. These writers are: Edna St.

This is one of the most frustrating books I've reviewed in a long time. With books like *Singled Out* and *Going Solo*, the choice to live alone and be single shouldn't be puzzling, especially to the kind of readers this book will attract. That said, the most difficult parts of singlehood aren't related to loneliness or existential angst or feelings of missing something. The challenges of being single arise from infrastructures and institutions that assume people live in families and come in pairs. Vacation packages, especially cruise ships. Health care. Restaurant reservations. Bella DePaulo's book, *Singled Out*, captures the reality. So my first quibble is that a lot of this book just seems irrelevant. Women may be defined by their marital status in some situations but a lot of women don't define themselves this way. Second, the book really doesn't explore the spinster role. Bolick spends a lot of pages explaining her social life, which morphs from serial monogamy to what she defines as the dating norm: going to bed with a lot of people she doesn't know very well. That's a life choice. Third, Bolick identifies five women who function as virtual role models. As she points out, they're unconventional but not all spinsters. I enjoyed reading about them but kept wondering why we were getting off topic. In fact, I'm not sure Bolick really "gets" singleness, whether we call it spinsterhood or something else. At the end of Chapter 9, she concludes a very interesting write-up of Maeve Brennan by noting that Maeve had moved around frequently among hotels, writers' colonies, and friends' cottages. She felt "asphyxiated" by closeness.

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