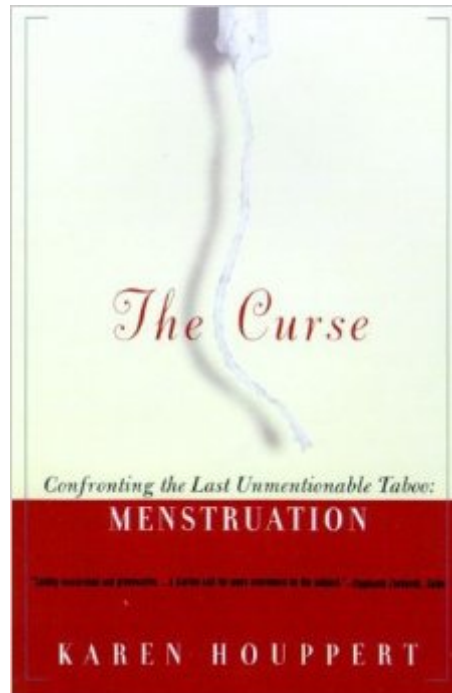


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# The Curse: Confronting The Last Unmentionable Taboo: Menstruation



## Synopsis

A provocative look at the way our culture deals with menstruation. The Curse examines the culture of concealment that surrounds menstruation and the devastating impact such secrecy has on women's physical and psychological health. Karen Houppert combines reporting on the potential safety problems of sanitary products--such as dioxin-laced tampons--with an analysis of the way ads, movies, young-adult novels, and women's magazines foster a "menstrual etiquette" that leaves women more likely to tell their male colleagues about an affair than brazenly carry an unopened tampon down the hall to the bathroom. From the very beginning, industry-generated instructional films sketch out the parameters of acceptable behavior and teach young girls that bleeding is naughty, irrepressible evidence of sexuality. In the process, confident girls learn to be self-conscious teens. And the secrecy has even broader implications. Houppert argues that industry ad campaigns have effectively stymied consumer debate, research, and safety monitoring of the sanitary-protection industry. By telling girls and women how to think and talk about menstruation, the mostly male-dominated media have set a tone that shapes women's experiences for them, defining what they are allowed to feel about their periods, their bodies, and their sexuality.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (8 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

It seems a little unfair that [I would allow a writer of a previous book called the Curse--who obviously has an axe to grind against Houppert's witty, thorough and intelligent writing and sees it as competition against the sales of her own volume--to write such a mean-spirited diatribe in the](#)

"customer reviews" section. Even more bizarre that actually allows Ms. Tobin to actually REVIEW HER OWN BOOK on that book's page (giving it five stars, naturally). As someone who has in the past taken the customer reviews seriously, it makes me really wonder whether anyone is minding the store. Regarding Houppert's book: It's good. Buy it. Ignore Tobin. She's got a major chip on her shoulder. Listen to Alix Kates Shulman and Peggy Orenstein--they're better (and fairer) judges.

I've just finished reading "The Curse"--if you're female and aren't filled with righteous indignation after reading this, you're either brain-dead or in a huge state of denial! Every single one of my girlfriends is getting a copy of this book. When's the first scheduled Tampax bonfire?;->

I'm also upset at the biased review written by the author of the other 'Curse.' Ms. Houppert's issues with both dioxin and capitalism fit perfectly into the book. The childbirth story was not only not long, but it related to The Curse's themes. And even as a life-long Judy Blume fan, I can honestly say her writing is pretty flat. It's clear your books are completely different, aside from the title, and I would never read your book based on that petty review. Not everyone is looking for a "gossipy history" of menstruation, some people are interested in facts. Anyway, not only was this 'Curse' engaging and interesting, it really made me angry about the way menstruation is treated in our society. Another reader mentioned that she felt no anger because they were providing products that women need, to say the least I DID feel angry, and much more informed, after reading about the way companies have, as the quote on the back says: "taken the natural workings of women's bodies...are medicalized, sanitized, taken from us and sold back to us at a profit." This is really a must for all women.

I found Houppert's book on a dusty old shelf in a local Surplus store. I'm not sure how it had gotten there, but upon reading a little into it I was sure it was worth the dollar it was selling for. I am one Chapter in and already she has changed my life. She provides astonishing information regarding tampons: what exactly is in them, what the industry hides, and what affects the secrets have had on women's lives. I promptly threw out all my tampons after finishing her first chapter! This book is not only for women, but those concerned with the environment, capitalism and how they all interconnect to make a horrifically clear picture of our socially accepted profit over people patterns. I found it for a dollar...you may not be so lucky...but there are some things worth knowing that you can't put a price on.

I happened to pick this book out of the stack of books I have been planning to read the other day - with my eyes closed. How amazingly coincidental that I picked "The Curse" when I just started my period for this month. Anyway, it's a good read - I especially like the euphemisms on the endpapers, most of which I never heard of in my life. I grew up in a house with 5 other females, so there were no cute little names for "that time of the month". As a matter of fact, when I got my first period, I was sick as a dog and my dad said "Now you are a woman" and I told him "If this is what being a woman is all about, you can keep it." M's Houppert explores the whole feminine hygiene industry, bringing up such bad memories as the "Rely" tampon (remember toxic shock syndrome?) and how dioxin is used in creating the various napkins / tampons most women use at sometime or another. I found this an extremely interesting book. From the extensive quotes from parts of Anne Frank's diaries to the MUM (Museum of Menstruation, located in New Carrollton, Maryland and run by Harry Finley, M's Houppert's extensive research makes this book worth a spot on your bookshelf. I recommend it highly.

Revealing work about the feminine protection industry but I couldn't really understand Houppert's indignation with the industry (except for the dioxin problem...) They are selling a product that we need! I'm so happy we no longer need to use those disgusting belts. I'm pretty happy with stick on pads. I've tried reusables but I think the industry is here to stay. I don't have a problem with that. I was expecting much more though, about how women are "The Other", which Houppert does talk about but not to the extent that I would have liked. I found the book easy to read and stay involved in, but it just as easily could have been an article in the Village Voice (which it was originally).

Another reader (the author of the other Curse book) complained about Houppert's long story about her birth. I didn't think the story was that long, and was appropriately included. Houppert admits that she herself is very much influenced by our male dominated society and it shows in her writing.

I can't stress enough how much this book has changed my perspective on not only my period, but the role of women in capitalist society in general. Simultaneously edifying, empowering, and exhausting, this account of the social notion of a woman's menstrual cycle is one that should be on every bookshelf. Simply amazing.

Fascinating analysis and great read!

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