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Wheels Of Change: How Women Rode The Bicycle To Freedom (With A Few Flat Tires Along The Way) (History (US))



Synopsis

Take a lively look at women's history from aboard a bicycle, which granted females the freedom of mobility and helped empower women's liberation. Through vintage photographs, advertisements, cartoons, and songs, *Wheels of Change* transports young readers to bygone eras to see how women used the bicycle to improve their lives. Witty in tone and scrapbook-like in presentation, the book deftly covers early (and comical) objections, influence on fashion, and impact on social change inspired by the bicycle, which, according to Susan B. Anthony, "has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world." NCSS's "Notable Social Studies Trade Books in the Field of Social Studies 2012" School Library Journal Best Books of 2011 Finalist YALSA Excellence in Non Fiction for Young Adults SLJ's 100 Magnificent Children's Books of 2011 Amelia Bloomer List --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

Series: History (US)

Hardcover: 96 pages

Publisher: National Geographic Children's Books; First Edition edition (January 11, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1426307616

ISBN-13: 978-1426307614

Product Dimensions: 7.8 x 0.4 x 10.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 26 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #689,325 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #82 in Books > Teens > Education & Reference > History > United States > 19th Century #253 in Books > Teens > Biographies > Historical

Customer Reviews

Take a lively look at women's history from aboard a bicycle, which granted females the freedom of mobility and helped empower women's liberation. Through vintage photographs, advertisements, cartoons, and songs, *Wheels of Change* transports young readers to bygone eras to see how women used the bicycle to improve their lives. Witty in tone and scrapbook-like in presentation, the book deftly covers early (and comical) objections, influence on fashion, and impact on social change inspired by the bicycle, which, according to Susan B. Anthony, "has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world." Q&A with Sue Macy, Author of *Wheels of Change* Q: Who

taught you how to ride a bike? What did it feel like when you took your first one for a spin? A: My dad taught me how to ride a two-wheeler. (He later taught me to drive a car.) I remember him taking me to a paved, pretty empty parking lot at a nearby park. It was a great feeling to be able to move and balance without training wheels, but I was also worried about falling. I don't think I did fall, though. Q: Why are bikes still important to women? A: I think that Leah Missbach Day does a great job in the foreword to *Wheels of Change* of explaining how bicycles are still important to one population of women--those in developing countries who are able to increase their mobility astronomically with the bicycles they received through World Bicycle Relief. But today in the U.S., bicycles are important to everybody. They allow people to do errands without using fossil fuels, to get great cardiovascular exercise, to see their surroundings in a whole new way. My neighborhood isn't great for cycling--too much traffic and too many hills--but I try to ride at least once a week in the spring, summer, and fall, usually stopping at a nearby farmers' market to restock on fruits and vegetables. It's a healthy way to live. Q: What's your favorite thing about the very first bicycle models? A: I love the ordinaries, which weren't the first models but rather the ones that started appearing in the 1870s, with the very large front wheel and the smaller rear wheel. I love the look of them; they're such a wonderful evocation of a time in history. When you see one, you're automatically transported back to that time period; but I wouldn't want to ride one. When I was visiting Dottie Batho, who contributed more than 20 images to *Wheels of Change*, I tried to hoist myself onto the seat of the ordinary that she has in her living room and I was scared to do even that. It was her late husband's bike and she said the first time he rode it, he fell head first over the front wheel and broke both his wrists! Q: How is the bicycle going to change the future? A: I really do think more and more people will go back to the bicycle as a replacement for cars and other types of local transportation and hopefully, towns and cities will start designating more space for cyclists to ride. The efforts of the Portland, Oregon, city government to make bicycling an integral part of daily life have been well-publicized, but even New York City has been installing 50 miles of bike lanes per year with the goal of having an 1,800-mile network of bike lanes by 2030. Cycling is a great way to get around and a great way to keep healthy. Q: What are kids going to love most about this book? A: *Wheels of Change* is a lively book full of awesome characters and its design is very appealing. I love the stories of the bicycle racers, most of whom had been lost to history until now. Their bravura and tenacity was pretty amazing. I think kids also will love the images--especially the bicycle artifacts from the 1800s--because they will help kids visualize what the period was all about. Plus, there are news clips about female cyclists in every chapter, reproduced verbatim, and some of them are wild. My favorite is "Don'ts for Women Wheelers" on page 38. Q: How has fashion

evolved around the bicycle? Do you think dresses and high heels impede a woman's ability to feel completely free? A: The advent of the bicycles in the late 1800s caused a fashion revolution for women because it made the need for comfortable, safe clothing for cyclists crucial. And once women started casting aside corsets and other oppressive fashion architecture, they realized there was much to be said for simpler clothing. I completely understand this evolution because, as a writer who works from home, I go for comfort over fashion most of the time. High heels are great for elongating one's legs, but they're a pain when it comes to moving freely or quickly!

Macy revisits a topic she touched on in her excellent *Winning Ways: A Photohistory of American Women in Sports* (1996) in this engaging look at the emancipating impact that bikes had on late-nineteenth-century U.S. women. The eye-catching chapters, filled with archival images of women perched sidesaddle on their steel steeds and racing furiously in bloomers on velocipedes, zero in on the profound ways that bicycles subverted traditional notions of femininity; according to one wary social commentator, "The bicycle is the devil's advance agent morally and physically in thousands of instances." A veteran nonfiction writer, Macy seamlessly weaves together research, direct quotes (sourced in an appendix that includes a time line and resource list), and historical overviews that put the facts into context, while sidebars expand on related topics, from cycling songs to standout female cyclists, including trailblazers Marie Curie and Annie Oakley. The narrow focus on cycling will open up broader thought and discussion about women's history, making this a strong, high-interest choice for both classroom and personal reading for adults, too. Grades 6-9. --Gillian Engberg

Narrative nonfiction is one of my favorite genres to read. I just love reading about real people, real times, and real places. Sue Macy has written a fascinating account of how the introduction of the bicycle helped women step out of the shadows where they had been kept for centuries (most of them, certainly not all). Like most technological advances, the bicycle had its supporters and its naysayers. I found it really interesting to read about the development of the bicycle along with advertising and marketing strategies. I found it ironic that cigarette companies placed images of women riding bikes on/in their boxes. I guess they wanted their brand associated with something fun and healthy, just like beer companies today want their product associated with athletics as well. It was fun to read about some of the ladies both celebrity and ordinary who used the bicycle and the freedom it represented to advocate for their cause(s) including the right to vote. It was also somewhat amusing to read about all the good and bad things doctors had to say about bicycles and

the medical conditions helped or hurt by riding a bicycle. Sidebars included short newspaper article reprints that provided a glimpse into some of the attitudes of the day. The one that really made me roll my eyes was a list of don't for female riders which included things such as: Don't wear a man's cap, don't criticize people's 'legs'", Don't wear clothes that don't fit, etc. Somehow I doubt there was a similar list for the men. The book is illustrated with posters, trade cards, postcards, and photographs of the period which helped me understand the text better. The photo of a young lady in her corset, looking like she couldn't possibly breathe in it made me wince. Macy has created a book that is both fascinating and entertaining. One that I can heartily recommend to those readers who enjoy getting a glimpse into the ways that life has changed over the years. Although a number of bicycle related inventions are still with us today, there are many that have gone away.

I would recommend this book for fourth grade and up. It is good to have some background on women's suffrage and overall women's discrimination throughout history. The language is not difficult, nor are the concepts but I think ten and up would get the most out of it. I would say once one is out of high school, the book may be a little watered down. I would have preferred a book with more detail and elaboration, however, for the target age, this is appropriate.

The bicycle played a most important part in liberating women beginning with the invention of the safety bicycle in the early 1890s. This book is written for young people but it makes interesting reading for people of all ages. The book is heavily illustrated and the pictures help tell the story. I highly recommend this book for all people including people of all ages and both men and women.

This full-color book is for all ages: adults will enjoy it as much as will middle graders. Every page contains photographs or diagrams or posters of some sort, and they all illustrate the history of women and the bicycle. There's some absolutely wonderful sidebar information on types of bicycles, how they were propelled, where they were raced, who held the records, and so on. The book is very well written and its argument convincing: that the bicycle helped women achieve a certain degree of freedom, and that once that was achieved, there was no going back -- only forward. My only complaint about this book is that it ends suddenly and abruptly: as a reader I would have liked a kind of tapering off into the present day. Or, if not that, some dates on the cover, such as 1850 - 1920 or such, so that I would be prepared for the story stopping.

great book, interesting read. colorful, engaging illustrations.

This is a wonderful book that everyone should read. It tells the story of the evolution of the bicycle and how bicycles helped liberate women. The illustrations are wonderful, too. Why weren't we taught this in school? This is an important part of women's history.

Good read on women's history as it pertains to the rise in popularity of the bicycle. Presentation is more like a children's book, which I didn't expect. But it's still a worthwhile purchase.

Bit of a coffee table book but a good contribution to 'women in biking', worth a read. View tips and guidelines | 3 more words required.

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