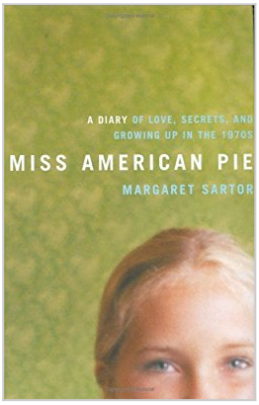

Miss American Pie: A Diary of Love, Secrets, and Growing Up in the 1970s

By Margaret Sartor

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A spellbinding and authentic document of American adolescence.

Set against the backdrop of the deep South in the 1970s, *Miss American Pie* is the unforgettable account of Margaret Sartor's life from age twelve to eighteen. A raw document crafted from diaries, notebooks, and letters, this deeply personal yet universally appealing story astonishes with its candor. Young Margaret moves with ease between the seemingly trivial concerns of hairstyles and boys to more profound questions of faith and meaning. By turns funny and poignant, heartbreaking and profound, she tackles all of the decade's issues?desegregation, drugs, the sexual revolution, the rise of feminism, and the spread of charismatic evangelical Christianity?with humor, frankness, and unexpected insight.

Miss American Pie reminds us what it feels like to grow up, offering a true and honest look at a teenager grappling with the timeless questions of sex, friendship, God, love, loss, and the meaning of family. The introduction and epilogue, written by Sartor from an older perspective, reflect on those turbulent and life-shaping years, revealing how the girl in the diary turned out after all, and demonstrating that childhood?both its joys and traumas?reverberate deeply in our adult lives.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Beginning in 1972, at age 13, Sartor records the highlights and low points of her formative years in Montgomery, Ala. Through succinct diary entries (Mar. 1, 1973: "I hate my buck teeth. I love Edgar Napoleon") that grow more insightful as she ages, the author, who teaches documentary studies at Duke, reveals her insecurities, spiritual awakening and early sexual encounters. Hers is a very normal American childhood, though a few things stand out: she experiences desegregation firsthand (she's white, but witnesses racism toward black kids) and is torn between her evangelical Christian community and her sectarian household. There are moments of impressive maturity and self-awareness, such as the May 18, 1977, entry: "I'm giving the invocation at the graduation ceremony. I'm sure they asked me because I'm the only kid willing to pray out loud who doesn't hand out pamphlets on the Second Coming"; or June 1, 1977: "Can you be alone when you are physically with someone?" Sartor's reproduction of her diaries differs from traditional memoirs in its lack of adult interpretation of events, told through the distance of time and wisdom. That may make it unusual, but publishing such generally mediocre diaries feels self-indulgent.

From School Library Journal
Grade 7 Up–Sartor's diary entries begin in 1972, the year of her 13th birthday, and continue until she is 18. All around her, in her rural Louisiana town, things were changing. Girls and boys were dating, the local high schools were becoming integrated, and new Evangelical Christian churches were forming. Despite the turbulent times, the author's writing reflects the typical concerns and crises of a teenage girl, from shopping for bras with her mother to taking placement tests at school to trying to figure out how to kiss without bumping noses. An introduction and epilogue provide some historical context, but the bulk of the text consists of the diary entries without further comment. Black-and-white photographs (presumably of the author, though no identifying information is provided) are placed at the beginning of each calendar year. The entries gradually reveal Sartor's growth over the years, but the book's format forces a tight focus on whatever events were most important at the time they were recorded. While some teens might be intrigued by this peek into someone else's life, this title may have difficulty finding an audience.–*Beth Gallego, Los Angeles Public Library, North Hollywood*

From Booklist
Two journals, both written by teens, offer intimate, documentary views of disparate adolescent lives.

Sartor, a teacher at Duke University, presents her diary-format account, based on letters and notebooks, of her teen years in Montgomery, Louisiana, during the 1970s. The entries are timely, with references to desegregation and racism and also to the Evangelical Christianity gaining prominence in the Deep South: "Satan came closer to me tonight than I've ever felt," she writes. Most entries, though, speak about common adolescent experiences, and her candor makes even the familiar captivating, whether she is frustrated with her body, suffering depression and insecurity, or finding the bold strength to tell a boyfriend that "her personality is not up for a total renovation."

The creators of *The Notebook Girls* are four contemporary Manhattan teens, who started the notebook as a way to stay connected with each other. As in Sartor's diary, the power here is in the raw honesty, and the format--handwritten pages and pasted-in photos--gives even more immediacy. These are girls who, like

Sartor, speak in bawdy, vulgar language; tease and tell fart jokes; worry about their bodies, their futures, and their friendships; and experiment with drinking, drugs, and sex. And like Sartor, these girls share sharp observations and a strong sense of identity. "Who the fuck are these guys?" asks one girl. "Who gave them the right to comment on girls' bodies like that?" The communal format creates more jockeying and joking and less personal revelation than a diary might. But taken together, these titles offer a fascinating view of what it means, then and now, to grow up female. *Gillian Engberg*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Melissa Chandler:

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