

Women's Magazines Essay

Do your own study of **three** women's magazines and use your findings to agree or disagree with Mary Kay Blakely's thesis in "Help or Hindrance?: Women's Magazines Offer Readers Little But Fear, Failure" that women's magazines are a major contributor to depression in women, and "Instead of encouraging women to grow beyond childish myths and adapt to the changes of life, women's magazines have readers running in place, exhausted." Make sure you take a personal stance on what you think are the important factors with regards to your thesis. If you disagree with her opinion, you will obviously have a different analysis of the following classifications of articles.

It will help to develop your argument if you use the same classifications as Blakely.

1) diet 2) health (covering for obsession with thinness) 3) preoccupation with youth 4) fashion 5) quick fixes 6) childish tone of do's and don'ts 7) yes and no simple answers to difficult issues.

Remember that now is your opportunity to be heard and to argue your own personal opinion. Show me that you are thinking about the provocative issues that are involved with this theme.

Attention: This assignment includes the use of study data, both from the Blakely and Dudash's essays in the text, and from your own replicated study. Your essays need to include statistics and descriptive analysis of articles and ads to back up your points. We will talk about this in class as we get closer to the due date.

If you have any questions, come and see me! I encourage you to make an appointment to go over your rough draft.

The essay should be a **minimum** of 3 pages, typed, and double spaced, but more is better since this topic needs to be supported and developed. You can use quotations and must use statistics from the two studies, but you need to explain how they relate **to your thesis**. Don't just stick statistics or a quotation in your paper to do your talking for you. All your paragraphs need to have your own topic sentences related to your thesis and statistics and quotations that support that topic sentence as well as the thesis.

This paper will be graded based on the following criteria:

- Is the paper the right length? Typed in MLA format?
- Do the ideas flow smoothly from one to the next, or does the paper read like a list?
- Does the paper give a thoughtful treatment of the issue?
- Is the paper a well thought out argument organized around a thesis?
- Does the paper have well developed paragraphs with topic sentences and adequate support?
- Has the paper been carefully proofread, including careful attention to proofreading issues such as subject/verb agreement, comma splices, fragments, and spellcheck?
- Does the essay have an appropriate and well developed introduction and conclusion
- Does the essay have **3 noun phrase appositives** in it and **3 uses of concession and/or contrast** (underlined).

Writing

The introduction should explain what the report will be about, in this case to inform your classmate about his or her prospects for the future.

The essay's body paragraphs should develop your main points—what you learned about work prospects in the future and the kinds of jobs available now, including the relationship between education and good work prospects. Be sure not to write just in general terms but to give specifics and examples. Additionally, don't feel that each of your points necessarily deserves its own paragraph. More important points may require you to write two or more paragraphs in order to develop them fully.

Your conclusion will probably contain your final recommendations to your classmate about how to achieve his or her goals.

Note: When you are writing, remember that a job is not the same as the person doing the job. In other words, a busboy, a cashier, a sales manager, and a teacher *are not jobs*. Jobs are busing dishes, working as a cashier or sales manager, and teaching. Be sure not to confuse the two. Review the Writer's Checklist on pages 125–126.

Learning What Our Magazines Tell About Us

In studying human societies, anthropologists have learned that we invent the worlds we live in and then believe that these made-up worlds of ours are “natural” and “real.” Not only that, but we think our own made-up views of the way human beings behave represent the truth for everyone. This habit can produce two bad results. One is that when we encounter a world different from ours, one made up by a different society, we usually consider it wrong—perhaps even barbarian or primitive or evil.

For example, during World War II, the Japanese armed forces treated prisoners of war with contempt and brutality as a matter of course, outraging their Western enemies, who believed prisoners should be treated humanely. Thus, Western societies viewed the Japanese as barbaric and even subhuman. In Western societies, surrendering to an enemy when one's cause is hopeless is considered not dishonorable but only sensible. But the Japanese just as firmly believed that surrender was cowardly and that the only honorable end for a defeated soldier was death. Most Japanese soldiers simply could not imagine living on after surrendering. As a result, the Japanese saw Allied prisoners of war as cowardly, contemptible, and subhuman.

There can be another bad result of holding that one's own view of the world is the only one possible. If this view turns out to be destructive, it may be difficult or even impossible to change it. For instance, in some cultures certain food sources that we accept as normal are considered holy and un-touchable, and people will literally starve to death rather than eat them. While many people in the United States think that Hindus are foolish for not

wanting to eat cows, what would you think of having dog for dinner? In many lands, dog meat is a natural part of the diet. In our own culture, we value certain social behaviors so highly—thinking them only natural—that we find it virtually impossible to change them even though they are poisoning our environment.

In the first of the following articles, Mary Kay Blakely discusses the kind of world women's magazines have "made up" for their readers. In this world women are told they must always look beautiful and never gain weight or grow old. In the second article, Susan Dudash has examined the articles in these magazines and come to the conclusion that they do not represent the reality of women's lives today.

Reading Assignment

Pre-reading

Before you begin your reading, think about the women's magazines you have read or glanced at (*Cosmopolitan*, *Seventeen*, *Redbook*, *Vogue*). You may want to go to a nearby book or magazine store and skim the table of contents of several traditional women's magazines; students who have copies of these magazines may wish to bring them to class for discussion purposes.

What are the kinds of articles in these magazines? What kinds of topics are their readers interested in? What things do their readers *value*—that is, what is important to them? When you categorize these articles, do you notice any patterns? If you do, what do these patterns suggest about the world these magazines present to their readers, a world their readers clearly think valuable since they continue to buy the magazines?

Remember to take notes as you examine and discuss this topic. And remember to read the following articles *actively*, underlining or highlighting the thesis and topic sentences and making notes in the margins when you happen upon some interesting point or observation.

HELP OR HINDRANCE? WOMEN'S MAGAZINES OFFER READERS

LITTLE BUT FEAR, FAILURE

Mary Kay Blakely

Journalist Maggie Scarf stumbled upon the following finding during her 10-year study of women and depression: "For every male diagnosed as suffering from depression, the head count was anywhere from two to six times as many females." The late Professor Marcia Guttentag, director of the Harvard Project on Women and Mental Health, confirmed the fact, calling depression "epidemic" among women. The strongest clue Guttentag's team of psychologists had unearthed about the reason so many women are depressed had come from a 1974 analysis of articles in women's and men's magazines.

The content of men's magazines "tended to concern adventure, the overcoming of obstacles; the preoccupations were with mastery and triumph," Scarf reports in her subsequent book, *Unfinished Business: Pressure Points in the Lives of Women* (Doubleday, 1980). In magazines written for women, however, "the clear preoccupation was with the problem of loss—loss of attractiveness, loss of effectiveness." The message women's magazines sent to 65 million readers was this: Whatever it is that makes you happy, you are about to lose it.

Twelve years after Guttentag's exhaustive study at Harvard, I conducted an informal, unscientific survey of my own. I spent \$16.58 for 10 recent issues of the 10 largest magazines about women to study the reflection of women as it came back to me through 2,793 magazine pages. (The top 10 women's magazines are *Family Circle*, *Women's Day*, *McCall's*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Redbook*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Mademoiselle*, *Woman's World*, and *Vogue*.)

Judging from the headlines on the covers, the foremost concern of women today is not to grow wiser but to grow smaller. The Average Reader, magazines assume, is on a perpetual diet. There were "Exercise and Diet Tips for Your Over-Fat Zones" and "The Four Hot Diets—What's Good, What's Not." The preoccupation with fat appeared as headlines on 60 percent of the covers, as articles in nine out of 10, and as advertisements in all of them.

Could this obsession with thinness contribute to women's pervasive depression? A recent study of bulimia, a disorder in which victims force themselves to vomit after eating, would indicate that it does. Alarming reports of bulimia among college-age women have been circulating for some time, and now there are symptoms of the illness among 30-year-old executives.

The obsession with thinness was never labeled clearly as "vanity"; it masqueraded as "health." Celebrities such as Jane Fonda, Cher, Raquel Welch and Stephanie Powers were offered as "health experts" to advise readers on how to maintain a 25-year-old physique well past 40. The clear message was that whatever growing and changing a woman must do psychologically to prevent depression, she had better accomplish it in a body that never grew or changed past 25. A youth/confidence equation appeared in several hundred pages of ads promising to fend off wrinkles with "anti-aging complexes," "age-zone protectors," "cellular-replacement therapy" and "line preventers." Again, unwrinkled skin was described as "healthy" skin.

Articles creating anxiety about "what's wrong with you" preceded ads supplying the remedies. One feature called "Quick Lifts for the Morning

Uglies," a peculiar form of depression suffered by young readers, mentioned seven tips for "improving your outlook." Five of them involved the purchase of a bath gel, a blemish cover, a blusher, a scarf, a perfume. Because a woman, if she lives to old age, will become wrinkled, will shift in weight, there will always be the need for more treatment. The Average Reader is not encouraged to look forward to her old self as a woman of achievement, but as a waste. "How you look" was synonymous with "who you are," and for older women that means "invisible."

Not only does the Average Reader have to achieve her growing and changing without bulges and wrinkles, but the current **purge** of serious issues means that she must proceed without information. As Elizabeth Sloan, the editor in chief of *McCall's*, recently told the press, the magazine's past issues had been "too text-oriented. We're going to have pictures of girls spinning, kicking, swirling. We're going to be much younger." She promised an end to "essays on serious issues, society issues. They just didn't belong." The decision not to shock the Average Reader, however, can **inadvertently** contribute to another kind of depression women suffer: the prolonged, debilitating feeling of powerlessness.

Surveys indicated the Average Reader liked how-to features, especially how-tos that would solve a problem by next weekend. The quick-fix approach permeated the pages of the recent issues: "How to Stop the One You Love from Drinking," "Loving Ways to Talk Out Anything—So Your Marriage Wins," and "How Not to Look and Feel Tired." There is hardly a problem in America the Average Reader can't somehow solve with health or beauty techniques. The beauty tricks recommended made the sad-looking woman in the "before" photo look decidedly more cheerful, but can a cold, a quarrel, and a hangover really be cured by applying mascara? "The articles speak to us as if women are extremely simple-minded," says science writer K. C. Cole, a panel member for a recent symposium on the trivialization of women in magazines at the New School for Social Research in Manhattan. "Problems are cast in terms of before and after, do's and don't's, yes and no. There are rarely shades of gray. It's the language a mother uses with a child, not the language of women dealing with extremely complicated issues."

As the late physicist Frank Oppenheimer once explained to his students, "We don't live in the real world. We live in a world we made up." The world made up for women through 2,793 pages of the magazines I selected was this: 40-year-old bodies can look like 25 if women would only try hard enough; if "anti-aging" formulas fail to keep wrinkles off women's skin, surgery is available; and marriages can be saved in three

purge: removal; **inadvertently:** accidentally

easy steps. If women feel depressed about any of this, they probably need more blusher.

The “Unfinished Business” Scarf wrote about six years ago is still 11
vastly undone. Instead of encouraging women to grow beyond childish
myths and adapt to the changes of life, women’s magazines have readers
running in place, exhausted. The anxieties and depression instilled by
these magazines have risen so high that executive women are submitting
to surgery. This is the world we have “made up” for women, and it is a
perilous place to exist.

When she wrote the essay that follows, Susan Dudash was a French major at Penn State University. The essay (in a slightly different form) appeared in 1989 in *The Daily Collegian*, the Penn State student newspaper.

WE’VE COME A LONG WAY, BUT MAGAZINES STAYED BEHIND

Susan Dudash, Student

When well-known newscaster Christine Craft lost her job several years ago, 1
many people assumed that she simply was not performing her job effectively. Instead, according to my sociology professor, Dr. Mari Molseed, Craft was fired because her employers found her to be “Too old and unattractive. . . . [Also, she] didn’t show enough **deference** towards men.” In an age where a woman sits on the Supreme Court and women may vote, this certainly seems ridiculous. However, this example shows the media’s important role in maintaining the **status quo** as well as in informing the public. The information that we receive from our media can be especially misleading when they purport to be conveying a different image about women.

One media form, working women’s magazines, generally presents an 2
image of women as incompetent; its traditional view mars the chance for the status quo perceptions of women to change. Magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Working Woman*, *Mademoiselle*, *Glamour*—even *Ms.*—claim to be up to date, yet still portray women as incompetent in regard to appearance, work and knowledge.

The magazines portray women as appearance oriented, which isn’t in 3
itself a problem, but the extent to which this image is presented may be. Articles and advertisements deal with clothes, hair, make-up—not business success or how to play the stock market. In three consecutive issues of *Glamour* I found a grand total of four articles that dealt specifically with women’s occupations. “Should You Quit Your Job If You’re Not Getting Respect?” turned out to be a survey, simply stating the dissatisfaction of women with their superiors, though the author *did* demonstrate that

deference: respect; **status quo:** existing situation

women shouldn't have to put up with disrespect or degradation. Another of these, "Is That Just-Right Job Really All Wrong?" was a disappointing and **patronizing** list of do's and don'ts. This particular article gives good hints on what to watch out for in choosing a new occupation, but by the same token, these bits of advice should be common sense. The article tells the reader to beware of jobs whose employees say the company is a bad place to work, or to watch out for companies with high turnover, little financial security and "nonexistent or vague" job descriptions. The third article, "Managing Your Money in the 90's: Which Old Rules Still Apply? Which Don't?", gave some useful information for those not up to date on expectations for the economy in the 1990's. This is to their credit. However, most women in the business field have probably had an elementary economics course, which makes some of the article's suggestions seem obvious. For example, of course it is better to buy a new car on credit when interest rates are lower **in lieu of** paying cash or even renting. In sum, even though these articles do deal with the job market, their advice tends to be either common sense or persuades the reader to change occupations.

This may be more apparent with our next example. The final article deals with "computeritis," a disease the article suggests is primarily caused by the repetitive motion of typing on a keyboard without enough little "breaks." Here, the article fails to follow up on the second cause of this disease: namely, thoracic outlet syndrome, a **hereditary** and easily treatable disorder. Here, the emphasis is on the work as a main cause of numb or tingly hands, not on the other causes. The article suggests that the "inflicted" worker take more breaks, hence work less.

In addition to these articles, I've found only one out of approximately fifty articles had anything to say about the woman and her job. In these same three issues, I also noted a total of three articles on the *work wardrobe*. This is not to say that there weren't countless articles on fashion, methods of seduction, and sex-related issues. These articles, along with those concerning make-up, or parties, constitute the remainder of the approximately fifty articles per issue.

The articles and advertisements in magazines for working women show perfect and unattainable images of women. Most of us don't realize the models themselves don't look this good; trick photography, silk screening, and expert make-up application present the image desired by these magazines.

These images lead women to believe their success lies not in their knowledge, but in their appearance. For example, a Nivea Skin Cream

patronizing: talking down to, condescending; **in lieu of:** instead of;
hereditary: acquired by birth

advertisement proclaims, "Is Your Face Paying the Price of Success?" A Forever Krystle cologne ad states, "CREATE YOUR OWN DYNASTY"; the accompanying photo shows a woman, arms wrapped around her man as he's dressing for work, a hard day at the office. A Pantene shampoo ad tells you to "Risk everything except your hair." Showing the **paramount** importance of the perfect appearance, a woman's face dominates the ad—a face devoid of any possible fault of complexion or hair. After skillfully applied make-up, and photo retouching, the woman is nearly perfect. Another ad for cologne, this time from Coty, tells us that we can "Make A Statement Without Saying A Word," and the beautiful flawless woman in the ad reinforces the fact; **diligence** or competence aren't required here.

According to these magazines, success depends on women's appearance, and their accomplishments are secondary. Women may work, state these magazines; however, the importance of their occupations is overshadowed by numerous articles dealing with non-occupational topics and ads. Out of about fifty features in a typical issue of *Cosmopolitan*, I found four articles that were occupation-oriented; one of these even dealt with purchasing real estate. *Cosmo* scored better than most magazines of its type in this category. In place of sound advice for the working woman, this issue chose to emphasize such things as "Living with a Difficult Man," "Women Who Attract Men (And Women Who Don't)," "How Much Sex Is Enough?" "Beauty Bar: What a Great Smile You've Got!" The list goes on and on, and these are only the articles dealing with men. The food and decorating section boasts a feature on "Bad Girl Beds," while other sections emphasize health, the importance of staying soft, smooth, young and physically fit. The Beauty and Health Report in October's issue of *Glamour* tells its women readers to "Exercise your breasts." In November's issue, *Glamour* urges women to "Stop obsessing about your thighs, hair, breasts." I'm not making this up. These magazines are sending out conflicting signals, in addition to placing their emphasis on image and appearance.

You can take the analysis further by looking at the advertisements yourself. In a particular issue of *Cosmopolitan* (November, 1989) at least 45 ads dealt with skincare, haircare, and make-up; 35 ads dealt with cologne; and 19 sold clothing. Also prevalent were cigarette and alcohol advertisements. Nothing occupationally oriented whatsoever was to be found. True, in some ads women were wearing work clothes; but it just so happens that none of the ads mention the workplace. The underlying message is the improvement of a woman's appearance—her skin and hair must look young, healthy; her scent must be attractive, if not seductive.

paramount: highest, greatest; **diligence:** constant effort

Advertisements abound demonstrating this point—women are imper- 10
fect, but need to be perfect to succeed. Advertisements such as for Epis-
age Ultra (THE CELLULITE SOLUTION), or Clairol haircolor (Whether you
want to be noticed a little or a lot, the Clairol Highlighting Collection is
who you really are), are prime examples. Countless ads for make-up—
L’Oreal, Clinique, Estee Lauder, CoverGirl, Max Factor, Almay—all show
models with flawless skin and hair, telling us that they use a particular
brand of make-up and look so refined. Women just aren’t good enough
as they are.

The magazines imply that working women must accept double duty— 11
as employees in the workplace and in the traditional roles as mother and
housewife. Nona Glazer, an authority in the field of women’s studies and
a writer for *Women’s Studies International Quarterly*, put it this way: from
“. . . cooking ahead . . . supervising children’s homework and spending
quality time with them . . . relaxing with one’s husband, studying to im-
prove oneself for the job,” women are expected to retain their traditional
homemaker roles in addition to their new jobs.

Advice and articles in women’s magazines therefore range from ad- 12
vice for quick one-pot meals to the proper dress-for-success attire. After
work, women have to deal with decisions about whether 15-second make-
up applications are better than the 12-hour process. A Coors ad states,
“Our Women’s Work Is Never Done.” The tone of some magazines sug-
gests that success comes with sexuality.

Even when these magazines deal specifically with the idea that women 13
work a “double” shift, they usually only address the situation and expect
the reader to accept it. Not surprisingly, studies conducted within the last
decade show that women are becoming more discontented with their sit-
uations in general. Women are expected to perform a double-duty job,
yet the magazines often consider them so incompetent. How are they to
perform these duties at all? These magazines consistently show an atti-
tude of patronization. Typical articles give advice such as: “How to Enjoy
the Superbowl—Whether You Like It or Not” or “Meeting His Mother: A
Survival Guide,” or “Create a New You—the Plastic Surgery Primer.”

The available working women’s magazines fail to give women enough 14
suggestions for future success, other than that related to a man. The
available magazines take the general attitude that women are incompe-
tent in respect to their appearance and work. Looking at women in this
way negates their importance in society. And the effects of the ideals be-
hind these magazines are all the more powerful because of their subtlety.

If these modern working women’s magazines are sending out conflict- 15
ing messages, you can only wonder what the rest of the media are doing.
Are women’s stereotypes really changing? If so, then why are women in
occupations traditionally held by men switching out of these jobs only a

few years after entrance? Why are women's *firsts* emphasized (first woman to run for vice president, first woman astronaut)? Even in an issue of *Ms.* only 15% of the articles dealt specifically with women and work; about half of these addressed the problems or obstacles that women are facing on the job. Are things really changing?

It is not merely enough to be aware of this misleading perception of women held by the magazines; we must demonstrate the need for more concrete changes to give women the place in society that, according to these magazines, is already theirs. 16

Post-reading

Blakely has classified certain articles in women's magazines; go back over her article and write down her classifications. Under each one write what it suggests about the world we have made up for women. Then write out *your* summary of what that world's main characteristics are, what its values are. Make a few notes for yourself about whether you think these characteristics and values are good or bad and why. Refer to the notes you've already taken.

Essay Assignment

Write an essay in which you examine three of the top magazines listed in Blakely's article, classify the leading articles only according to their content, and explain what these classifications suggest about the world these magazines project to their readers. You may use Blakely's classification if you wish, or you can make and use your own.

Pre-writing

After you have chosen the three magazines and classified the leading articles, choose two or three of the categories that best represent the world *you* think these magazines suggest. Using your pre-reading, reading, and post-reading notes, write out a brief description of that world. What are its characteristics? What are the values it projects? Then choose several *specific* articles that best exemplify that world.

At this point jot down a brief outline, ordering the categories that represent the world.



Diet Grrrl - Feminism and Women's Magazines

Kate Allen looks at women's magazines today - and thinks enough is enough.

She is rake-slim, tanned. Her eyes gaze placidly out from skilled maquillage, her expression indecipherable. Her hair is glossy, clothes casually cutting-edge. She is all-woman - and yet none. She is magazine-girl.

Do you know her? Because I don't. And I don't think I want to.

In the preface of her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Freidan wrote: "There was a strange discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to conform". Although the vast majority of women's lives have changed beyond Freidan's greatest hopes since she wrote those words, the disparity between the media's view of women and women's real lives is still in some ways present. While adopting a veneer of feminism, women's magazines are actually extremely reactionary, oppressive and old-fashioned. Open up your average mag and what do you see? How To Be Better In Bed. This Season's Key Pieces. Eyeliner 101. Celebs talk about their boyfriends. "My Night As A Lesbian". The World's Most Romantic Holiday Destinations. Luxury Health Spas. Recipes For A Summer Barbeque. Passing lipservice is paid to independence and career, but the main message girls are getting from the magazines meant to represent their interests is that what is really important is sex and fashion. In theory they've got bright futures - but in practice, get thin and get a boyfriend!

Our culture is cursed by its obsessive scrutiny of "image", and its preoccupation with the construction and maintenance of the "correct" appearance is making us sick - literally. An estimated 2% of women aged 15-30 suffer from anorexia. A further 4% suffer from bulimia. Other illnesses such as body dysmorphic disorder, self-harm and binge eating are also affected by media pressure. A 1998 survey by Exeter University of 37,500 young women between twelve and fifteen found that over half (57.5%) listed appearance as the biggest concern in their lives.

Anorexia information charity [ANRED](#) says: "Magazine pictures are electronically edited and airbrushed. Many entertainment celebrities are underweight, some anorexically so. How do we know what we should look like? It's hard.

"Most people want to be happy and successful, states that require thought, personal development, and usually hard work. The media, especially ads and commercials for appearance-related items, suggest that we can avoid the hard character work by making our bodies into copies of the icons of success. "Reading between the lines of many ads reveals a not-so-subtle message ? 'You are not acceptable the way you are. The only way you can become acceptable is to buy our product and try to look like our model, who is six feet tall and wears size four jeans - and is probably anorexic'."

In 1995, before television came to their island, the people of Fiji thought the ideal body was round, plump, and soft. After 38 months of Melrose Place, Beverly Hills 90210 and similar Western shows being beamed into their homes, Fijian teenage girls showed serious signs of eating disorders.

What is feminism doing about this? Thirdwave sees the reclamation and celebration of women's appearance as part of its project. It's about refocusing our campaigns from the scrutiny of women's private lives back to the social and economic inequalities that still exist. Young women are free to take joy in their appearance, after secondwave feminists claimed the right for us not to do so. Women's magazines are the lowest common denominator of this attitude - just as image-fascist as the unreconstructed sexists Freidan wrote about in 1963. They have hijacked our right to enjoy our appearance and turned it against us yet again.

Even the Riot Grrrls, liberated and assertive women, may not have helped as much as they intended - Courtney Love, quoted in Poppy Z Brite's biography *The Real Story*, fears the movement was co-opted or its threat neutralised as the Riot Grrrl "style" developed and became fluffier. "Courtney wondered whether these [young] girls understood the irony of this look, or if they were just being encouraged to appear young, cute and harmless," Brite writes. Love told Melody Maker she feared that Riot Grrrls had become too "teensy weensy-widdle-cutie. I think the reason the media is so excited about it is because it's saying females are inept, females are naive, females are innocent, clumsy, bratty ... I wore those small dresses [too], and sometimes I regret it." And it is certainly true that female musicians are easier for the media to accept when their music is presented with traditionally "feminine" accoutrements; Courtney tells Brite about touring after Kurt Cobain's death: "In Minneapolis I wore a dress that was so restricting and shoes that were five inches high, I could barely stage-dive. "Then I got the best write-ups - for being feminine, I guess. I couldn't move well and I was restrained, which equals great review. That's pretty horrid."

Thirdwave is not to blame for this, of course - but it has to defend its territory. Just because some women see through the myth these magazines are trying to flog does not mean that all do. Far too many girls suffer and are unhappy because a cosmetics company suit wants to sell more makeup, or a clothing company needs to shift lots of stock. Magazines have to recognise the power they have over women's lives, and the responsibility that carries. They must also be forced to see that makeup, sex, clothes and holidays are just part of our lives - there is so much about their readers that they are ignoring. These are supposed to be our magazines - reflecting our concerns, debating our issues, of interest TO US. Let's stop letting the suits tell us what to read and buy. Let's tell them.

See also...

- One F-Word reader [gives Marie Claire a good talking to](#) in this excellent and inspiring example of a complaint to a magazine.

Kate Allen
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About the author

Kate Allen is a national news journalist and is very interested in direct action and activism. she thinks newsagents shouldn't put music magazines in the "men's interests" section.

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