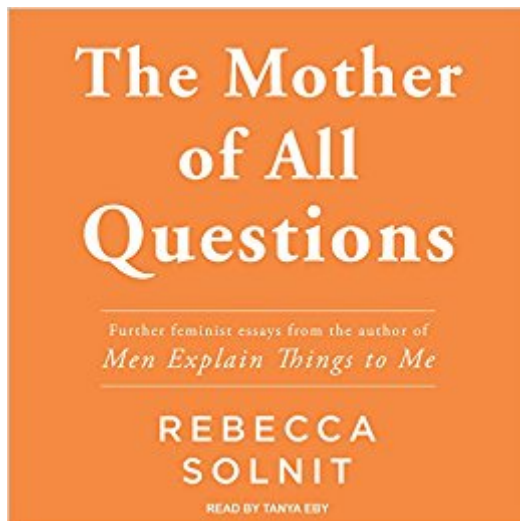


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# The Mother Of All Questions



## Synopsis

In a timely and incisive follow-up to her national bestseller *Men Explain Things to Me*, Rebecca Solnit offers sharp commentary on women who refuse to be silenced, misogynistic violence, the fragile masculinity of the literary canon, the gender binary, the recent history of rape jokes, and much more. In her characteristic style, Solnit mixes humor, keen analysis, and sharp insight in these eleven essays.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Solnit documents an uprising of empowerment that can amplify others' voices and stories with the potential to bring meaningful change." ---Shelf Awareness

Writer, historian, and activist Rebecca Solnit is the author of sixteen books about environment, landscape, community, art, politics, hope, and memory. She is a contributing editor to Harper's and a frequent contributor to [tomdispatch.com](#). Tanya Eby has been a voice-over artist for over a decade. She is an Audie-nominated and AudioFile Earphones Award-winning narrator. Besides narrating, Tanya spends her time teaching creative writing classes at the collegiate level, blogging, and working on her own novels.

I preordered this book with high expectations, having recently finished *Men Explain Things To Me*. And let me say: It surpassed them! This book is a phenomenal look into how men need to (also) be feminists. What I especially appreciated about this book is that it was even more aware of

intersectionality and privilege than *Men Explain Things To Me*. Solnit shows much more awareness and appreciation for not only race, sex, cisgender, sexual orientation, class, age, religion, etc. ... she also calls out how these combine and interact. Another thing I like is how surprisingly relevant the book is, making references to occurrences as recent as Donald Trump's "Grab them by the pussy" comment. Now, I do not want to call this a flawless book. Remember, it is a collection of essays, and while they generally build upon each other, you might get to the end of the book and think, "What kind of ending was that?" I found the first half of the book especially exceptional, with the second half being still great, but not *as* great, especially with final chapter. But Solnit, as always, is a magician with her writing, and will take you on a meandering, but laser-focused, journey through modern-day feminism.

The thinking behind this book is exactly the quality of thinking that has been missing in American civic life for this past election cycle. Solnit is incisive, challenging and more than a little disturbing. She is focused throughout this collection on the silence that patriarchy imposes on women (and, in a different way, on men) and the way that silence is extended to include people of color, lesbians, gay men, etc. In this review, I mostly want to talk to men who are challenged by and resistant to her arguments. One of Solnit's main themes is the role that violence or the threat of violence plays in maintaining patriarchy. I would like to recount for you two quick stories: Many years ago, I read a review of Susan Brownmiller's *Men Women and Rape* which stated that Brownmiller's thesis could be summarized as saying that all men want to rape all women. I found that summation absurd but it also made me wonder. So I performed a social experiment. For the next five years or so, I asked women (who I knew well enough) if they had ever been the victim of some sort of sexual assault. Out of the 20+ women who I had this conversation with, all of them said yes. The assaults ranged from men masturbating in front of them in some sort of public space to overly aggressive dates to actual rape one of which occurred at knife point. Some of these assaults were able to be laughed off and some changed the lives of the woman involved. All involved the possibility or actuality of violence. My second story comes from a recent bout of jury duty in Portland, OR. I was pooled along with 47 other people for a case involving resisting arrest. One of the questions that we all were asked was had we ever been the victim of a crime and, if so, what? Of the 24 or so women in our pool, 10 stated that they had been the victim of a sexual assault. None of the men had been the victim of a violent crime. My suggestion is to read Solnit as though you are thirsty and her book is a glass of water. Then go out and talk to some of the women you know about what you read and ask them what they think. And then listen to them. And then read Susan Brison's *Aftermath* and then

listen some more.Maybe the best way for men and women to really have a real conversation about feminism, patriarchy and violence is for us men to be quiet for a while. Just saying.

Art... Stories..change us, can make us stupid, can hide the truth. Some of the essays are repetitive. That is helpful as it reveals another layer of what is hidden...A tough book about men hating on women. Not all men ..But how hating on women effects all women. Brilliant.

I love this writer. Clear, eloquent, deep analysis.

Solnit is clear sighted and unafraid to speak the truth. I enjoy her writing.

Relevant and thoughtful.

Solnit's books never disappoint!

This essay collection is one my favorite my Solnit (which is saying something). I can't suggest reading it strongly enough.

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