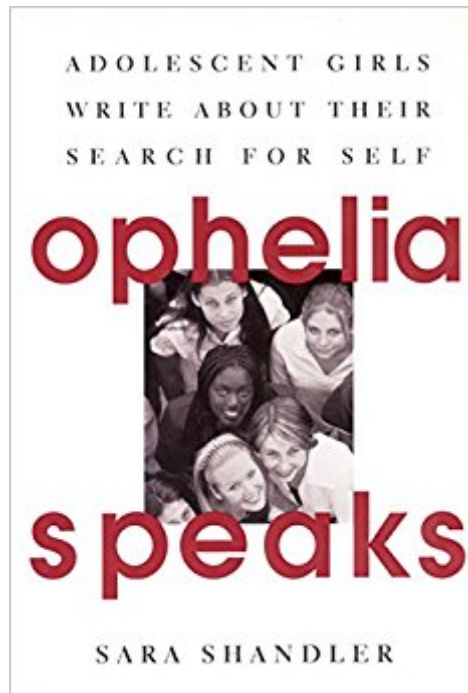




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Ophelia Speaks: Adolescent Girls Write About Their Search For Self



Synopsis

At age sixteen, Sara Shandler read Mary Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia*, the national bestseller that candidly explored the unique issues that challenge girls in their struggle toward womanhood. Moved by Pipher's insight yet driven to hear the unfiltered voices of today's adolescent girls, Shandler yearned to speak for herself, and to provide a forum for other Ophelias to do so as well. A poignant collection of original pieces selected from more than eight hundred contributions, *Ophelia Speaks* culls writings from the hearts of girls nationwide, of various races, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Ranging in age from twelve to eighteen, the voices here offer a provocative and piercingly real view on issues public and private, from body image to boys, politics to parents, school to sex. Framing each chapter are Shandler's own personal reflections, offering both the comfort of a trusted friend and an honest perspective from within the whirlwind of adolescence. In these pages, you will see your best friend, your daughter, your sister--and yourself. At once filled with heartbreak and hope, in these pages Ophelia speaks.

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Customer Reviews

Ophelia Speaks by Sara Shandler is a clever response to Mary Pipher's bestselling *Reviving Ophelia*. Shandler reveals telling portraits of teenage girls in this book, a compilation of essays, poems, and true-grit commentary from a cross section of teenage girls (or Ophelias), throughout the country. The book succeeds because it gives voice to their deepest concerns and their too-often frenzied lives. Because she's a college student, Shandler considers herself a peer of these adolescent girls, able to tap into their collective consciousness. Shandler is as determined as she is

a sharp reporter in chronicling the lives of these young women. To research the book, she sent out a mass mailing of 7,000 letters to high school and junior high school principals, counselors, and teachers explaining her book project and urging them to encourage teenage girls to contribute. The topics covered run the gamut, but they include parental expectations, racial relations, and faith, among others. Sadly, eating disorders are an all-too-popular topic. The good news is that Shandler's contributors offer up some real insight for their peers. In one essay titled "Food Is Not My Enemy," Elizabeth Fales "calls us to a new feminism. In the old feminism, our mothers fought for the right to choose abortion. In our generation, we must fight for the right to eat." The book also gives practical insight for parents who may find it hard to relate to their teenage daughters. In a nutshell, it appears that adolescent girls want unconditional love from parents who can be confidants without being overly critical. --Peg Melnick

Inspired by Mary Pipher's 1994 bestseller *Reviving Ophelia*, which shed new light on the problems of contemporary female adolescence, Shandler, currently an undergraduate at Wesleyan University, set out to give voice to the real Ophelias, America's teenaged girls. Herself included. Just 16 years old when she started this project, Shandler enlisted the help of hundreds of educators, counselors, pastors and administrators to find other girls who wanted to write about the issues most important to them. Ranging from problems with body image and self-mutilation to difficult relationships with parents and other family members, to intense academic pressures, the book is organized by subject and includes entries from dozens of girls across the country. We see girls in distant communities facing similar struggles as they attempt to navigate the pressured and competitive world of adolescence. Judging from the hundreds of contributions Shandler received, the issues these girls raise are weighty ones that our whole society needs be concerned about. Many of the girls write in an intensely personal style, but their concerns should not be written off as diary angst. Shandler has done an admirable job of shaping the disparate pieces into a disturbing mosaic that reveals the seriousness of teenage problems. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I loved this book and the idea but took away a star because I think the editor didn't need to sprinkle her own essays which didn't have the same substance as the ones she received. Those pages would have been better filled with people who had similar problems to the *Reviving Ophelia*, which is the book that preceded this one. A preface of the editor's story would have been enough, I found her inserts boring. BUT I give her credit for her brilliant idea in having girls write essays and appreciate that she wanted to give the girls a voice. I do think she should have applauded Mary

Pipher since this book was an extension of her work. Shandler's comments came off like a rebuttal, which is ironic since that was the attitude of the girls Pipher tried to save. Do keep in mind that Shandler was young when she put this together. I also didn't like how she gave the stories away by talking about them before we got to read them so I found myself skipping through a lot as not to spoil the essays.

I really had hoped that this book would be just as good, if not better, than *Reviving Ophelia*. I did not feel that this book was very well put together. There was no "flow" to the book and I just couldn't get into it. I think I'd rather stick to the original book. It was far more appealing and enjoyable to read than *Ophelia Speaks*.

Today's society has made us feel that our children must exceed in everything they do from grades to appearance(The need to be accepted into college is an added pressure). The young women who speak to us in this book feel that pressure and are just plain scared. This book which my daughter and I read together made me understand her feelings so much better(It was a terrific way to broach subjects that we parents may feel strange talking to our children about.Thanks Sara!

Excellent companion book to Mary Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia*. Belongs on the book shelf of Mothers, Daughters and Fathers who want to validate and extend the crucial lessons of Pipher's work about the toxicity and craziness American culture wreaks on our daughters.

Wow! I read this book as a follow up to Mary Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia*. *Reviving Ophelia* deals with issues from a professional side. It too was a great read, but *Ophelia Speaks* was incredible. Every thought I had as a teenage girl and even now as a 25 year old was covered. It dealt with everything from relationships to eating disorders to death.Now I find the book even more helpful as a first year teacher. I teach mostly freshman. It reminds me that there are a million different things these kids are dealing with on a daily basis.I recommend this book to anyone. It's great for girls to see that they aren't alone. It's great for Mom's cause they've been there too. And it is even great for men, to see exactly what is going on in our minds!Get it. Read it. And share it with a girl you love!

Very important information contained in this book.

I bought this book to research a novel I am writing. I'm closing in on sixty, and I liked the stories.

Some are very toughing, very sad. The Author, who compiled and gives commentary on the stories of many teens, is a very talented young lady.

I bought it for my granddaughter and she liked it.

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