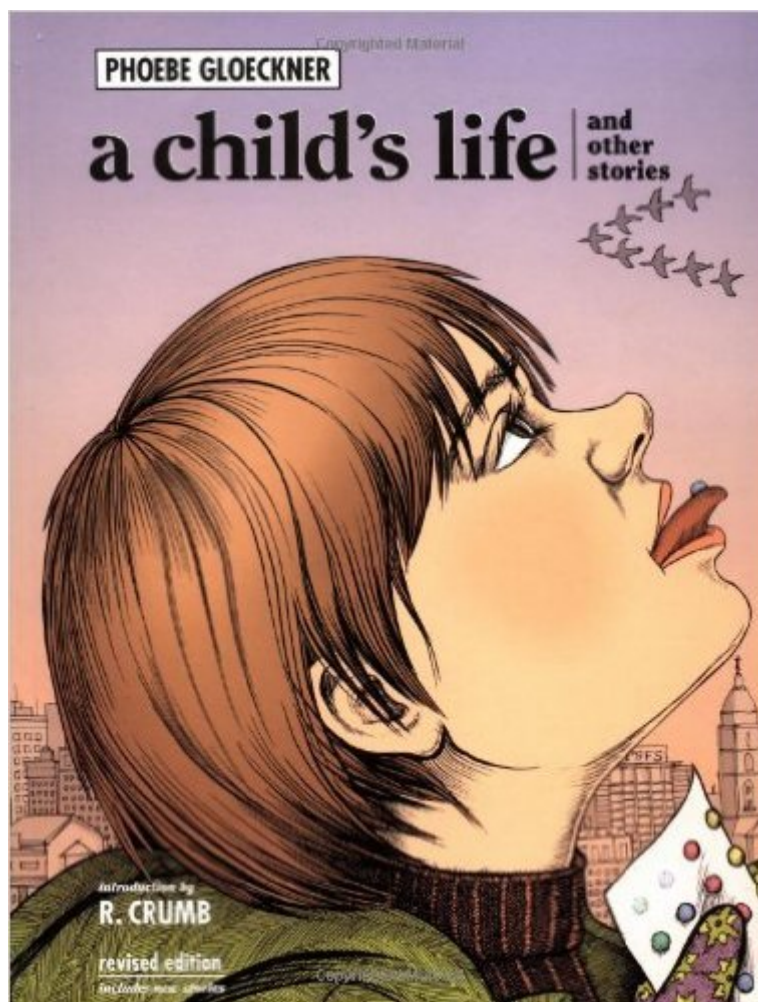


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# A Child's Life And Other Stories



## Synopsis

Phoebe Gloeckner's first book collects her highly praised autobiographical accounts of a teenage girl's loss of innocence through sex, drugs, rape, and AIDS. This edition includes eight pages of new material. Long respected as one of the finest and most original of today's underground comics artists, Gloeckner shows both technical artistry and tremendous range—from her sly, lurid, and brilliantly colored posters for rock groups to her textbook-quality medical illustrations; from her sharp naturalistic juxtapositions for *The Atrocity Exhibition* (J.G. Ballard) to the signature comics for which she is best known. Pages include both black and white and color comics, some that were published before in obscure comic books, and some of her classics in addition to new stories. In detailed, nuanced panels, these strips depict the isolation, horror, and disappointment—but also the revolutionary, transformative power—of young women trapped in circumstances ringed with drugs and sexual abuse. Gloeckner continues as a major literary and visual artist.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

How well do you we really know even our nearest and dearest? How do we project adult sexuality on children, and what are the consequences of this drive? How does an artist take the ugly and sordid materials of her early life and make of them something altogether beautiful, inspiring? These questions are all explored in this big book of Phoebe Gloeckner's "comic" art and writing, which I consider the book of the year. A legend in the world of underground cartooning, and in the avant-garde circles of San Francisco Bay Area high art and poetry, Gloeckner takes on a variety of

charged social and sexual issues and, in one dazzling tour de force after another, treats them thoroughly, artistically, with the depth perception of a brilliant novelist, challenging our conceptions of experience, hope, debasement and youth like a modern-day Henry James. At the end, the author seems to have triumphed over her rough beginnings and to have found love and self-respect. Warning: I wouldn't give this book to kids, but what do I know? Its rough language and troubling sexuality may be just the mirror to their own lives that they need and want and can profit from. As Gloeckner shows us so vividly, we are all on a long journey, and the pain, fear and loneliness of childhood can only be transmuted into acceptance and wisdom through the crucible of expression.

A Child's Life is hard to read but even harder to turn your eyes away from. Her child-like drawings combined with adult events and content perfectly express the difficult adolescent limbo between girl and woman.

This book was reviewed here: [...]Phoebe Gloeckner's *Diary of a Teenage Girl* is *An Account in Words and Pictures* of Minnie, a fifteen-year-old who is having an affair with Monroe, a 35-year-old man who is also her mother's lover. What makes this story so different from other *child abuse memoirs* is that not once in the book does young Minnie (or anyone) claim she was coerced, abused, molested or raped. In fact, throughout the book, we are led to believe that Minnie was an active and willing participant in the relationship. There are endless coming-of-age stories depicting young boys enjoying their budding sexuality without shame, many of them lusting after women twice their age. Usually we are given a view of women as sexual objects, yet deny that they are sexual creatures. This is a story of a teenage girl shamelessly exploring her sexuality with enthusiasm. She is intelligent, self aware, amorous, sexually liberated, without the usual consequential disaster normally associated with these traits. This is one reason why *Diary* is such a unique novel. This 300 page book switches between prose and graphic novel, starting with a detailed drawing of Minnie, dark long hair with short bangs, big eyes looking up into the sky. The words on the opposite page read: *I DON'T REMEMBER BEING BORN. I was a very ugly child. My appearance has not improved so I suppose it was a lucky break when he was attracted by my youthfulness.* You can tell in the drawing that Minnie is not bad looking, but it is easy to get right into her mind-set, because what 15-year-old ever knows she is attractive? We also understand that this character has some insight because she knows it was her youthfulness that attracted the attention of Monroe. Set in San Francisco during 1976, the adults in Minnie's life have no

boundaries, or any understanding of her emotions, needs or intelligence. Her best friend Kimmie is the epitome of all Minnie dislikes in herself. As we get to know Monroe better, we understand that he is an insecure, needy, emotional child at best, and at worst, he is an all-out child molester who should be imprisoned for life. This book is unique, powerful and not for the tenderhearted. If you are bored reading about women that are usually the victim, always innocent, never responsible for their own decisions or their own lot in life, you will find this story refreshing in its truthfulness. The artwork is beautiful and detailed. It's no surprise the author/artist works as a medical illustrator. I also read *A Child's Life*, Phoebe's previous book published in 1998. The graphic novel was classified as pornography and refused entry by customs officials in both France and England. It reads to me as the story-board for the 2002 *Diary*; if you are planning on reading both, start with *A Child's Life*, not because it's necessary for the story line, but because reading it after *Diary* might be redundant or anti-climatic. Favorite quote "I wish I knew someone who was happy" or "My youth is something that cannot be helped."

This collection of Phoebe Gloeckner's comics is definitely not for the faint of heart, but it's worth a reading. If you haven't read her novel, *Diary of a Teenage Girl*, I think you will find this book a better introduction to her work. The themes are much the same and the comic art is very well done. The subject matter is pretty bleak.

I don't know how I learned of this book, but it is disturbing, and, yet, compelling. The author, Phoebe Gloeckner, is a medical illustrator and also an abuse victim. She has, among others, a rather disturbing illustration of a child having oral sex with an adult man. She is medically technical with some of her illustrations of sexual abuse, sometimes giving cross sections of the abuse. I think sexual abuse victims will feel that her story has some resonance with theirs. She depicts the mental manipulation of abuse and some of the underlying psychology going on through her illustrations in a disturbingly accurate way that few "professional" books show!

I can't say enough about this author/artist. I've just finished reading the book and am almost speechless. For anyone out there still dealing with demons of their own less than perfect childhoods, this book takes on the feel of a close friend in the same situation. The author, in a semi-autobiographical fashion, recounts a childhood of sexual abuse, drug abuse, and general coming-of-age well before it ever should. Full of amazing illustrations (Gloeckner is a lauded

medical illustrator as well as excellent cartoonist), this book is sure to please anyone looking for something different, and in my case, cathartic. I don't think I could begin to recommend this book highly enough. I'm just glad that I live in a day and age where this book is not only allowed to be published, but can earn accolades as well (the least of which is from me). Thank you, Phoebe!

What was most disturbing about this book was how much responsibility the author seems to take for all the horrible advantage that was taken of her in her childhood and early teens by disgusting lecherous old creeps. The drawings are often graphic and I'm not all that fond of that peculiar "alternative comics" (comix??) drawing style, but the stories are powerful, and ring so true, that anyone that's had a life similar to Phoebe Gloeckner's really ought to check this book out.

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