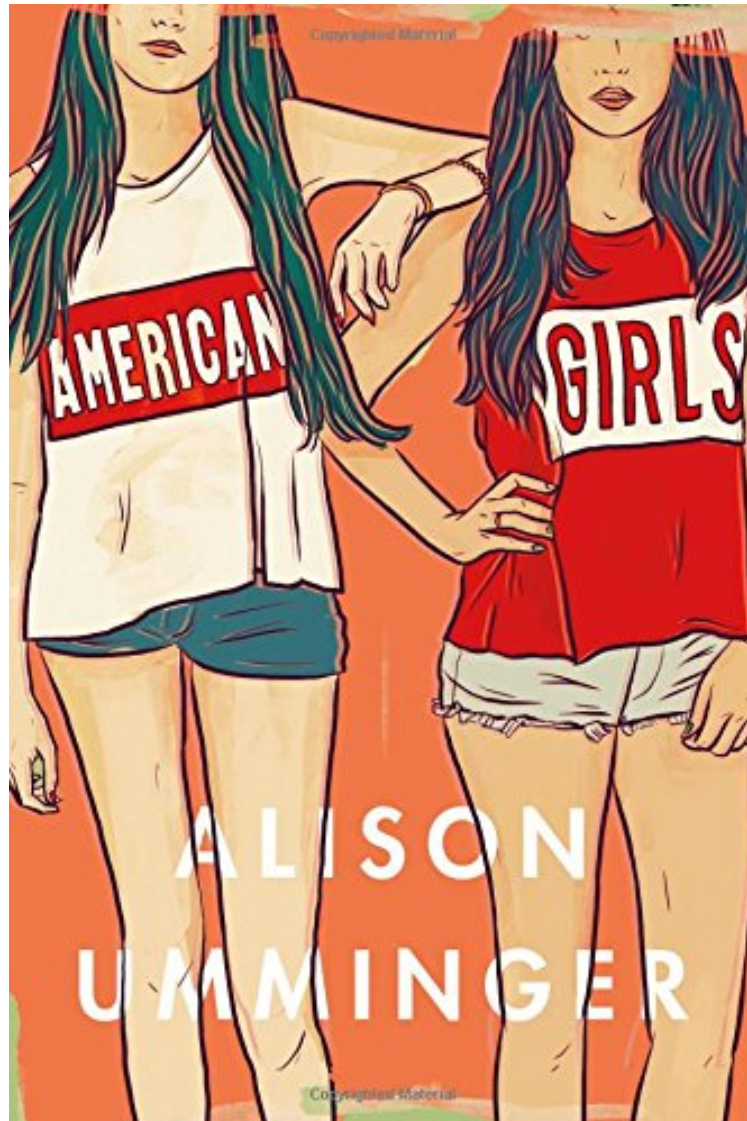


American Girls: A Novel

Alison Umminger

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Alison Umminger : American Girls: A Novel before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Girls: A Novel:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Nonstop read. By Robert W. Hill I'm an old guy--75--retired professor of English, who actually remembers the Manson Helter-Skelter stuff when it was permeating the culture, but if you want to read this excellent book as a primer on Mansonism you will miss the point. I read it nonstop during an eight-hour car trip from having seen my family (including my daughter, of course), and the portrait of this Anna rang completely true to me. Well, true in the way Holden Caulfield rings true to me . . . Ms. Umminger's book is loaded

with threads of family and American culture, and she is an author who knows how not to leave them lying around loose. The characters are memorable, the family relationships instantly recognizable, and the prose . . . well, as my professional academic work was primarily in contemporary poetry, I must say the prose is nowhere "prosaic." Smart, often funny, but always just right. I said I read it nonstop, didn't I? . . . 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. but it is fascinating to watch her grapple with questions of why the Manson girls and their looks get more attention than the victims and how to love the maddeningly imperfect people in your life. Umminger is constantly forcing Anna (and the reader) to look at the people she encounters, whether it's members of the Hollywood B-club, the Manson girls, her family, LA, or herself and somehow make sense of all their internal and external contradictions. The book is definitely edgy and dark at times - the nature of the subject matter is not always easy (everything from the Manson murders to her sister's dysfunction), but it's not sensationalized - it is there to be examined in all its tragedy and complexity. The author's writing style provided several opportunities to stop and just appreciate how she had turned a phrase, and there were times that I had to stop reading To work through my own thoughts and feelings mom an incredibly messy question about people or culture that Anna falls into almost stumblingly and is able to ask but not really answer. A book that will be appreciated best by older teens and adults who enjoy YA literature.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. I loved Anna. Her voice was so genuinely a 15 ...By A. McNamaraHaving read some of the lower ratings here, these are my thoughts:Umminger assumes intelligence in her reader - that we make the connections that are deeper than a 15 year old mind could understand, that we know about Manson. This was not a book about Manson or the girls; it was about the effect of the murders - both how much and how little. It made the point that we live in a world so dark that even something so horrific had a minimal impact in the long run. That we don't live in a world much different than the one that facilitated that cult.It's a book about choices and their outcomes and how we live with or live up to the consequences. How we can see a little into our future or a parallel and stop ourselves from becoming something we can't live with.I loved Anna. Her voice was so genuinely a 15 year old. All the characters read very real, for better or worse. As I said on Twitter, it read like water - I just glided through the story and was completely pulled along.

A bittersweet, honest, and widely acclaimed YA coming-of-age novel that distills honest truths about American girlhoodAnna is a fifteen-year-old girl slouching toward adulthood, and she's had it with her life at home. So Anna "borrows" her stepmom's credit card and runs away to Los Angeles, where her half-sister takes her in. But LA isn't quite the glamorous escape Anna had imagined.As Anna spends her days on TV and movie sets, she engrosses herself in a project researching the murderous Manson girlsand although the violence in her own life isn't the kind that leaves physical scars, she begins to notice the parallels between herself and the lost girls of LA, and of America, past and present.In Anna's singular voice, we glimpse not only a picture of life on the B-list in LA, but also a clear-eyed reflection on being young, vulnerable, lost, and female in America in short, on the B-list of life. Alison Umminger writes about girls, violence, and which people society deems worthy of caring about, which ones it doesn't, in a way not often seen in teen fiction.American Girls is:An ALA Booklist Top 10 First Novel A Kirkus Best Book of the YearA Barnes Noble Best YA Book of the YearA Chicago Public Library Best of the Best of 2016A Bustle Best YA Book of the YearYALSA's Best Fiction for Young Adults"Messy, honest, and unflinchingly real. I can't get this book out of my head. I don't want to get this book out of my head." Becky Albertalli, Morris Award-winning author of Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda

From School Library JournalGr 8 UpA meandering look at a murderous time in America's history and how the behavior of the young girls who carried out those atrocious crimes compares to the emotional viciousness of teenage girls of today. Umminger's novel offers a glimpse into the life of Anna as she in turn explores the lives of serial killers, the infamous Manson Girls. Anna is 14 and feels like a castaway in her own life; her mom has started a new life with a new family she doesn't fit in with, her dad has a new girlfriend as well, and her best friend may not be the greatest influence. Running away to stay with her glamorous sister in California seems like her best escape route, but life in L.A. brings problems and dangers of its own. To earn her plane fare back, Anna agrees to do film research on Charles Manson's female followers, who committed a series of murders in 1969, and learns that the line between good and evil is often less defined than it may at first seem. This is an introspective account of how deeply the invisible scars of familial emotional abuse can run and how easily they can wreak havoc on the lives of everyone close by. VERDICT Recommended for fans of realistic fiction who have a morbidly curious streak running through them but who may not be quite ready for the truly "hard" stuff yet.Emily Grace Le May, Mt. Pleasant Library - Providence Community Library, RI An ALA Booklist Top 10 First Novel for YouthA Kirkus Best Book of the YearA Barnes Noble Best YA Book of the Year A Chicago Public Library Best of the BestA Bustle Best YA Book of the Year"Two new novels explore the story of the Manson murders by shoving the ringleader to the side and putting the girls (and girlhood itself)

at the center of the narrative: The much-discussed *The Girls* by Emma Cline, and the less-analyzed, though no less worthy, *American Girls* by Alison Umminger. Cline and Umminger take a crime that seems impossible to understand, and show the girls behind it being fueled by feelings that are all too familiar." *The Atlantic* "Messy, honest, and unflinchingly real. I can't get this book out of my head. I don't want to get this book out of my head." Becky Albertalli, Morris Award-winning author of *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* "An extraordinary book, with empathy and heart to spare." Jeff Zentner, Morris Award Honor-winning author of *The Serpent King* Alison Umminger doesn't pull any punches in her debut: Funny, sad, often surprising, and just damned authentic. I know I won't be the only one who didn't want Anna's glittery-dark Hollywood summer to end. emily m. danforth, author of *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* "An incredible book and so, so important." Kiese Laymon, author of *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America* "A razor-sharp commentary on our culture, observed with keen wit from the perspective of one honest and complex American girl. An insightful, original take on the coming-of-age story." Kirkus, starred review "Bittersweet and true, Anna's journey to self-discovery is one that should be widely read." ALA Booklist, starred review "Reveals richly complicated relationships among mothers, daughters, and sisters." Publishers Weekly, starred review About the Author ALISON UMMINGER grew up in Arlington, Virginia, and as an undergraduate was the fourth woman to be elected president of *The Harvard Lampoon*. Today, she is a professor of English at the University of West Georgia in Carrollton, Georgia, where she lives with her family. *American Girls* is her first novel.