



## Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution

By Adrienne Rich

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**Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution** By Adrienne Rich

**Adrienne Rich's influential and landmark investigation concerns both the experience and the institution of motherhood.**

The experience is her own?as a woman, a poet, a feminist, and a mother?but it is an experience determined by the institution, imposed on all women everywhere. She draws on personal materials, history, research, and literature to create a document of universal importance.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Asking "But what was it like for women?" with "painful consciousness of my own Western cultural perspective and that of most of the sources available," Adrienne Rich examines pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood from historical, physical, religious, institutional, political, and personal angles. In her introduction to the 1986 edition, she explains "I did not choose this subject; it had long ago chosen me... I only knew that I had lived through something which was considered central to the lives of women... a key to the meaning of life; and that I could remember little except anxiety, physical weariness, anger, self-blame, boredom, and divisions within myself..." Written with a stimulating combination of poetic rhythm, scholarly precision, feminist perspective, and personal reflection, **Of Woman Born** is both an engrossing read and an affirmative, potentially life-changing examination of what it means to be of woman born. -- *For great reviews of books for girls, check out Let's Hear It for the Girls: 375 Great Books for Readers 2-14. -- From 500 Great Books by Women; review by Jesse Larsen*

#### From the Back Cover

'In order for all women to have real choices all along the line,' Adrienne Rich writes, 'we need fully to understand the power and powerlessness embodied in motherhood in patriarchal culture.'

#### About the Author

Widely read, widely anthologized, widely interviewed, and widely taught, Adrienne Rich (1929–2012) was for decades among the most influential writers of the feminist movement and one of the best-known American public intellectuals. She wrote two dozen volumes of poetry and more than a half-dozen of prose. Her constellation of honors includes a National Book Award for poetry for *Tonight, No Poetry Will Serve*, a MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant in 1994, and a National Book Award for poetry in 1974 for *Diving Into the Wreck*. That volume, published in 1973, is considered her masterwork. Ms. Rich's other volumes of poetry include *The Dream of a Common Language*, *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far*, *An Atlas of the Difficult World*, *The School Among the Ruins*, and *Telephone Ringing in the Labyrinth*. Her prose includes the essay collections *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*; *Blood, Bread, and Poetry*; an influential essay, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," and the nonfiction book *Of Woman Born*, which examines the institution of motherhood as a socio-historic construct. In 2006, Rich was awarded the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters by the National Book Foundation. In 2010, she was honored with The Griffin Trust for Excellence in Poetry's Lifetime Recognition Award.

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##### Harold Martinez:

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