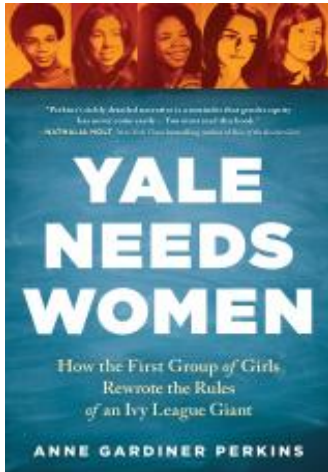


# Yale Needs Women: How the First Group of Girls Rewrote the Rules of an Ivy League Giant

by Anne Gardiner Perkins

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## About the Book

In the winter of 1969, from big cities to small towns, young women across the country sent in applications to Yale University for the first time. The Ivy League institution dedicated to graduating "one thousand male leaders" each year had finally decided to open its doors to the nation's top female students. The landmark decision was a huge step forward for women's equality in education.

Or was it?

The experience the first undergraduate women found when they stepped onto Yale's imposing campus was not the same one their male peers enjoyed. Isolated from one another, singled out as oddities and sexual objects, and barred from many of the privileges an elite education was supposed to offer, many of the first girls found themselves immersed in an overwhelmingly male culture they were unprepared to face.

YALE NEEDS WOMEN is the story of how these young women fought against the backward-leaning traditions of a centuries-old institution and created the opportunities that would carry them into the future. Anne Gardiner Perkins' unflinching account of a group of young women striving for change is an inspiring story of strength, resilience and courage that continues to resonate today.

## Discussion Guide

1. After screening for academic strength, Sam Chauncey and Elga Wasserman looked for toughness when selecting Yale's first women undergraduates. "There was no point in taking a timid woman and putting her in this environment," said Chauncey, "because it could crush you." Do you think they were right to consider a student's toughness? As a high school senior, would you have met this standard?
2. *YALE NEEDS WOMEN* focuses in particular on the experiences of five women students --- Shirley Daniels, Kit McClure, Lawrie Mifflin, Connie Royster and Betty Spahn. With which of these five did you identify most closely? Why? Was there another character with which you connected more strongly?
3. Yale may have gone coed in 1969, yet women --- whether student, administrator or professor --- were still barred from many of the traditional paths to influence and power, both at Yale and beyond. Can you provide some examples? How did women create power in other ways?
4. What parallels do you see between the experiences and activism of black and white women students at Yale? What are the differences?
5. *YALE NEEDS WOMEN* includes a center section of photographs. Choose one and discuss how you first responded to it. What drew you to this photo in particular? What questions, if any, do you still have about it?
6. Yale's first women undergraduates sometimes found themselves the only woman in a classroom full of men. Were you ever the only person of your gender in the room? How did it affect how you behaved? How others behaved towards you? Compare this to a situation in which your gender was in the majority.
7. *YALE NEEDS WOMEN* chronicles some of the sexual assault and harassment suffered by Yale's women students. How has this situation improved for women college students since 1969? How has it remained the same?

## Author Bio

Anne Gardiner Perkins is an award-winning historian and expert in higher education. She grew up in Baltimore and graduated from Yale University, where she won the Porter Prize in history and was elected the first woman editor-in-chief of the *Yale Daily News*.

Anne is a Rhodes Scholar who received her PhD in higher education from the University of Massachusetts Boston. She earned her master's degree from Harvard, where she won the Littauer Award for academic excellence and served as a teaching fellow in education policy. Anne has spent her life in education, from urban high school teacher to elected school committee member, and has presented papers on higher education at leading conferences.

When she is not writing or doing research, Anne enjoys hiking with her family, tending her vegetable garden, and beating her children at board games. She lives with her husband in Boston and in Harvard, Massachusetts.

*YALE NEEDS WOMEN* is her first book.

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