

Disrobing the Good Girl

Saturday afternoon, I was sitting in my sorority's basement listening to our recruitment chair speak about how to act with our potential new members in the fall. She emphasized how we are to make the best first impression possible to these potential recruits. "We are the nice girls, *the good girls*. Even if the potential new member completely insults us and our sorority, we must smile, say "thank you", and move on to the next topic of conversation."

What is a good girl, and why are we obsessed with them? Good girls reflect the admired values at the times. In my search for answers, I explored etiquette guides and dating manuals from the 1930s to today. I also interviewed cotillion participants and tied that together with the concept of the ideal woman. Taking this information, I will present a timeline of what defines a good girl in several categories through the decades.

I came into this project thinking that etiquette guides from the 1930s to the 1960s were full of sexist, demeaning comments about women. That there would be nothing to gain from them but sneers about the old fashioned manners and standards imposed on women at that time. It's true that some rules were outdated. I initially cherry picked sexist rules that supported my biased conclusion, but I eventually realized I was wrong. I was pleasantly surprised to find something else; I uncovered in these dusty books solid advice on how to be a good human being. These books were directed to women as a guide to building the perfect "good girl", but what I found can and should be applied to all people. One of my favorite quotes that I read was in the 1940s etiquette guide, "Show kindness at all times. Our world needs kindness more than anything else" (Bryant, 1944, p. 145). If more people lived by these two sentences, the world would be a brighter place for all.

The problems that these girls faced in the past were the same problems girls today face. In the 1940s etiquette guide, small anecdotes frame etiquette lessons. These lessons range from waking up to acne, to quarrelling with siblings, to wanting to ask the cute boy to go out sometime, to feeling homesick. These stories made the old, dusty books seem more real. The times may change, but the trials of adolescence are universal. We may think of the classic, American good girl of the past as having little to no problems, but the truth is, she faced the same (if not more) amount of complications we face today.

I googled searched "what is a good girl" to start. What came up surprised and disgusted me. A baby names website composed a list of "good girl names" (like Catherine, Agnes, Claire, and Alice) and "bad girl names" (like Blaze, Lolita, Lilith, and Delilah). What I noticed was that a vast majority of the "good girl" and "bad girl" names were tied to historical, biblical, or fictional characters and their respective reputation. Even more disturbing was the description at the top for "good girl names" – "Bad Girl names are hot, but Good Girl names -- sweet, innocent, feminine baby girl names -- are too. If

these are too angelic for you, consult the Bad Girl collection.” Besides the point that the website is calling a baby girl’s name “hot”, why does the name a girl is given at birth constitute whether she is a good girl or a bad girl? I began looking at etiquette guides and dating manuals for traits of the long aspired “good girl”.

1930s

For the 1930s, I read Beatrice Pierce’s *It’s More Fun When You Know the Rules*. The first sentence of the book read: “Are you a good girl whose good times have sometimes been spoiled – simply because at the crucial moment you didn’t quite know what to do or say?” (Pierce, 1935, p. 3) A good girl, “sweet and attractive in appearance,” (Pierce, 1935 p. 256) was educated on her social graces, and knew how to react to different social situations.

Good Girls in School

I was surprised at how blunt this chapter was. For example, are you less than popular at school? Well, there’s an easy fix for that – just follow these three easy steps! By golly, once you realize you need to conform, friendship will be a snap!

- Face the fact that you need to increase your worthiness of friendship
- Cultivate your mind
- Make yourself an attractive person to look at (Pierce, 1935, p. 74)

That was a bit harsh. There was some timeless advice, though.

“Friendship means giving your time, your sympathy, your understanding. It means keeping dates, even when something more interesting comes along. It means having the courage to stand up for a girl you like when people criticize her. No matter how shy you are, if you have these qualities and are willing to give something to win and keep friendships, real friends will be yours.” (Pierce, 1935, p. 74)

In addition to the timeless advice, the modern good girl student had a trim figure (Pierce, 1935, p. 77), wore “simple, casual, comfortable, and carefree clothes” (Pierce, 1935, p. 76), never looked messy at school (Pierce, p. 79), never wore jewelry at school (Pierce, 1935, p. 78), and studied hard as to foster genuine interest in her education (Pierce, 1935, p. 79).

Boys

If a girl didn't have a date for the dance, she had some serious reflection to do. "If you lack partners, it is possible that you haven't done your part in getting acquainted with boys. Are you interested in the things that interest him?" (Pierce, 1935, p. 113). Because surely, "above all else, you want a boy to ask you to dance" (Pierce, 1935, p. 104). But fear not! You and your girlfriends can go to the dance, supervised under the watchful eye of your chaperone. You've practiced all the latest dance moves, but now it's time to get gussied up. Appearance is more than meets the eye. It is your "dress, posture, manners, and your way of talking, laughing, and walking." (Pierce, 1935, p. 106). Above all else, never act eager or smarter than him (even if you are). "Very few boys like earnest-looking girls. Girls with brains are all right, but the brains mustn't be too evident. Especially at dances" (Pierce, 1935, p. 108). Boys even weighed in on what they look for in a girl! "A boy likes to escort a girl who knows what to do and what to say. He likes her to have assurance and poise. He is proud...when she conducts herself correctly in public places" (Pierce, 1935, p. 108). I.e. a good girl. What do you do if a rude boy asks you to dance? Sorry sister, but you have no choice in the matter. Grin and bear it for the duration of the song, and hope you aren't stuck with him too long. After the boy thanks you for the dance, never say thank you. Instead, say "I enjoyed it too." This way, you give the peasant reason to believe you are highly sought after (Pierce, p. 111). Finally, don't be boy crazy. "Don't overdo your interest in boys. Never let them feel that you are running after them. Don't telephone a boy just to say 'hello'. And don't wait around corners, or the library, or post office, watching for a chance to start a conversation" (Pierce, 1935, p. 114).

Body and Health

A healthy, curvy body was sought after in the 1930s. One thing that wasn't though, was "prominent, floppy buttocks" (Pierce, 1935, p.120). Girls wore natural-looking makeup that included "...light powder, no lipstick (reserved only for very special occasions), and no eye-makeup (always looks wrong on a teenage girl)" (Pierce, 1935, p.124). Additionally, girls should not wear clothes that are too tight (Pierce, 1935, p. 128). The final gem was that bras "...will add a great deal to your happiness" (Pierce, 1935, p.130).

Finally, good girls go on dates to colleges with college boys (notice, it doesn't say 'good girls attend college').

College

It goes without saying that a chaperone will always be present when a girl goes to a men's college (Pierce, 1935, p. 213). Where can a girl go without a chaperone, you may ask? "After she is 17 or 18, even the strictest community sanctions her going with him to a matinee, a football game, or to a tea dance at a nice hotel or country club. That is, providing her parents approve of the boy in question" (Pierce, 1935, p. 217). Can't afford a country club you say? Well, you're flat out of luck. Do nothing that would raise suspicions about you and your date. "It is best not to agree to sitting outside in cars. As you might suspect, sitting in cars lead to complications, and to "raised eyebrows" from the chaperone as well" (Pierce, 1935, p. 216). Girls still can't refuse a dance. Finally, dining out on a date is complicated. "Tell the boy what you want; he is the one to give the order to the waiter. Of course, if the waiter asks you a direct question, you answer him, but you shouldn't give him your order. Neither do you say "thank you" when he serves you" (Pierce, 1935, p. 218).

1940s

The golden girl of the 1940s was well rounded in all aspects of her social and home life, in addition to beauty and manners. For this section, I read two books, *Future Perfect* and *Pretty Please*. Sweetness was a necessary quality for marriage, as explained in, "Young girls are like flowers – roses, daisies, rare lilies – so dream the poets. And some girls are like snap dragons – so say the members of their families – ready to snap at the slightest provocation. 'And she used to be such a sweet child. She's going to be a nagger when and if she ever gets married'" (Bryant, 1944, p.40).

Body and Health

Are you beautiful? See how you compare with this checklist!

- "Don't tweeze your brows – it gives the most unnatural look to a girl's face" (Bryant, 1944, p. 28)
- Brush your hair "...until your scalp tingles" (Bryant, 1944, p. 21)
- Smile
- Read in adequate light as to not strain your eyes
- Have skin free of acne
- Have smooth hands and nicely manicured nails

High school can be rough, but nothing gives a girl more reassurance than “knowing she’s pretty to look at, attractive, and well groomed” (Daly, 1948, p. 4). Knowing that a girl is beautiful to look at is one less thing she has to worry about. The best girls look beautiful naturally (but with makeup). “Many a boy has remarked that he likes his girls to look “natural”, but no smart gal will take that too seriously, and resort to going to school with her hair uncurled and nails unmanicured! Instead, learn to adopt a look of “careful casualness,” with thoughtfully chosen clothes, simple hair-dos, and unobtrusive makeup” (Daly, 1948, p. 5). When was the right time to start wearing makeup? “It depends on...the age at which you begin to look as if you need a touch of makeup to point up your prettiness” (Daly, 1948, p. 16). A style icon at the time was Ingrid Bergman and her natural look. While you are young and still have your little girl look, wear pale lipstick (Daly, 1948, p. 17). Can’t get a date? Maybe you’ve neglected your personal hygiene. “If boys haven’t been tripping over each other to hold your hand, perhaps it’s because you’ve let your hands get rough and chapped” (Daly, 1948, p. 53).



Life at Home

The entire family must work together to have the “ideal American home you see in the pictures” (Bryant, 1944, p. 65). Here’s some tips for a seamlessly-run family:

- Do you cheerfully say “good morning?” You should!
- Are you fully dressed? You should be.
- Are you at the table on time? If not, do you apologize?
- Have pleasant and light conversation at the dinner table. Save the gossip for you and mother later
- If the meal is good, compliment mother
- Are you a good listener? Become one!
- Do you listen when people talk, or do you always insist on being the center of attention

For an example of how you should treat your future husband, look to Mother. “By all means, be a good listener. It is the number one quality on the list of qualities men adore in women. You can’t start too young to know how to listen. Learn at home. Watch Mother sit back and smile sweetly when Dad begins to tell that same old story. Notice how his eyes shine with love and admiration when she laughs again and again at the joke he told last night and the night before” (Bryant, 1944, p. 66). Women are supposed to build up her husband and ensure his ego is never bruised. Do not ask Father for instructions on how to set a table – homemaking is a woman’s job! (Bryant, 1944, p. 77). Home life also includes good citizenship, respect for the American flag (Bryant, 1944, p. 230), attending church, and saying grace before meals (Bryant, 1944, p. 91).

Boys (and how to prevent abduction or rape)

Boys are unruly creatures that need a woman's guidance to stay in line. "It is the girl who must set the standards for behavior...set your standards high! Be a fine person – and that does not mean be a prude or a priss" (Bryant, 1944, p. 168). Don't hit a boy back if he hits you. "Know your own strength. If a boy gives your hair ribbon a yank, don't turn around and bop him on the head with an armful of books. He is only teasing you – peculiar way boys have of showing they like you. Just remember they are queer specimens of homo sapiens and they must be tolerated. There will always be boys, and boys will always be boys. You will find they are quite nice sometimes" (Bryant, 1944, p. 149). What if there's a boy who is being so friendly, you feel uncomfortable? "If you should be walking down the street and some high school Jackson mistakes you for a high-school Jill and looks at you with glad eyes and speaks to you with gladder voice, be not unfriendly! Smile! And keep on going – going – gone. But if the glad lad or any joy boy follows you give him a deep-freeze stare. If the Gorgon look does not still him and he insists upon being palsy-walsy, hop to a cop and tell him about it. If you are on an unbeaten path, seek shelter" (Bryant, 1944, p. 166).

1950s

For this section, I read *Dating Days*, a 1950s booklet guide to teenagers dating.

Dating

For the guys and girls just entering into the dating world, group dates are an easy transition. Girls are on the hunt for a boyfriend and potential husband. "This sense of security [of going steady] is especially important to girls, for by social custom they must depend upon a boy to ask them for dates" (Kirkendall & Osborne, 1951, p. 36). Keep in mind that boy-girl relationships do have a bearing on marriage (Kirkendall & Osborne, 1951). Look for marriage-worthy characteristics, because marriage is the ultimate end goal.

What Do Girls Like in Boys?	What Do Boys Like in Girls?
• Courteous	• A peppy girl who likes to have fun
• Consideration	• Beautiful girls
• Good Looks	• Good sportsmanship (don't lead him on)
• Poised/Maturity	• Warmness and Cordiality
• Straight-Forward	• Girls who are considerate

Can a girl kiss a boy on the first date?

It depends on social customs of your area. "In some communities kissing is disapproved and a kiss on the first date would leave the impression that the girl was "easy" (Kirkendall & Osborne, 1951, p. 25).

Should you date a person who is several years younger - or older – than you?

"The usual social pattern is for the couple to be of the same age, or the girl slightly younger than the fellow. It's the person, not the age, that really counts" (Kirkendall & Osborne, 1951, p. 27).

What about restaurant etiquette on a date?

Allow the boy to pay for the meal. "Don't insult the boy's masculinity by offering to split the bill" (Kirkendall & Osborne, 1951, p. 29).

Can a girl ask a boy for a date?

Sometimes, but more often, wait for him to ask you. "In the normal dating situation, however, it's best for the girl to wait until she's asked. A fellow tends to shy away from a girl who seems to be "pushing" herself by asking him to take her somewhere" (Kirkendall & Osborne, 1951, p. 24).

What if I develop feelings of sexual desire?

STOP! "In our society, pre-marital intercourse is not accepted" (Kirkendall & Osborne, 1951, p. 40). If you start kissing a boy, and it leads to foreplay, stop. Have a frank conversation where you decide how to curb these feelings of sexual desire. Maybe decided to reduce time spent alone, and instead go out to more public places. Premarital intercourse will damage your entire future. (Kirkendall & Osborne, 1951, p. 48).

1960s

For this section, I read *Everyday Etiquette: Answers to Today's Etiquette Questions*. I focused on etiquette regarding boys and church (because the author assumed that proper people have some form of religion). This book is set up in a question and response format, so I will follow suit.

Boys

Is it proper for a single girl to have dinner in a bachelor's apartment without a chaperone? (Vanderbilt, 1967, p. 30)

"In this case, a girl not out of her teens would do better to avoid such a dinner engagement unless others, considerably more mature than she, are present...A career girl, from her twenties onward, can accept such an invitation but should not stay beyond 10 or 10:30...an old rule and good one is, "avoid the appearance of evil."

There's a single man who I like very much... but who hasn't asked me for a date...would it be alright to ask him to come and see me? (Vanderbilt, 1967, p. 31)

"Yes, if you are rather casual about it and invite him first when there will be others of your age present...while you should never be overly aggressive in the pursuit of the male, you should realize that a man is more inclined toward a woman who shows obvious interest in him than toward one who seems completely indifferent."

When just two – man and woman – dine together, who gives the order? (Vanderbilt, 1967, p. 125)

"The man asks the woman what she would like to have -perhaps makes some suggestions, and gives the order to the waiter...at a table of women where...all pay for themselves, orders are always given individually."

Who gets out of a taxi first, a man or woman? (Vanderbilt, 1967, p. 134)

"A man always goes first in this case, turns, and assists the lady down from or out of the vehicle by offering her his hand, not his arm."

I am a girl of 15. My mother says nice girls don't call up boys. I think this has changed, don't you? (Vanderbilt, 1967, p. 166)

"Yes, it has changed somewhat. A girl should really have some excuse for calling up a boy unless she wants to seem to be chasing him. Perhaps she needs to call him about homework or to invite him to a dance or, under certain circumstances, to some entertainment at her own house. If she knows the boy very well and sees him all the time, she could call him just to talk as she might any other friend, but she should be careful to not overdo it."

When I'm at a restaurant with a boy, how do I order dinner? (Vanderbilt, 1967, p. 167)

"You give your orders to the escort rather than to the waiter, although if the waiter asks you specific questions about your order you may answer him direct...A girl may know all about the food herself, but, as a guest of a man in a restaurant, she defers politely to his suggestions..."

Should I kiss him at the end of the night? (Vanderbilt, 1967, p. 169)

“You kiss him goodnight, briefly, only if you want to. A girl is never obligated to kiss a boy just because he expects it. It is always the boy who thanks the girl for her company, but a girl should always say that she has had a very good time – even when she hasn’t.”

Should I give him a gift if he gives me one? (Vanderbilt, 1967, p. 172)

“That’s one nice thing about being a girl – when you receive a gift you are not expected to give one in return to a boy. You usually wait on this until you are engaged. If your escort brings you flowers it is all right to give him a boutonniere from them, but don’t order one separately for him.”

Church

Is it proper to wear jewelry, like earrings, in church?

Tasteful earrings worn in church are quite alright, as long as they’re not too distracting.

I occasionally visit churches other than my own when visiting friends. What is the etiquette regarding proper dress in different places of worship?

“We wear conservative “best” clothes, and we tastefully refrain from wearing extreme hats or bright colors that would seem to distract the other worshipers from their meditations. In the Roman Catholic church and Orthodox synagogues, hats for women are required.”

Cotillions and Debutantes

In this section, I interviewed my professor who grew up in debutante society and one of my best friends who attended cotillion. I attended cotillion as a girl, but I was curious to see how it differed throughout the country. My school was required to participate in Town & Country Cotillion in middle school. I learned valuable life lessons, like when the boy asks “may I fetch you a drink”, you reply “yes you may”, and receive a glass of Hawaiian punch.

Cotillion

Cotillion is a curriculum where young girls and boys learn etiquette and ballroom dancing. Girls wear white gloves and pearls and the guys wear ties. According to the National League of Junior Cotillion,

“Junior Cotillion places as much emphasis on etiquette, manners and character education as it does on dancing. The social and character education components of the program include rules of proper telephone courtesy, acknowledgments of gifts, introductions, receiving lines, participating in group settings, polite conversation, paying and receiving compliments, sports etiquette, first impressions, dress code for all occasions, manners in the home and in public places, table manners, formal place settings, styles of dining including American, Asian, and Continental, skills involved in being a guest, hostess or host, and many other areas of social behavior. Other topics covered are the ethics involved in the areas of having honor, dignity, respect, honesty, fairness, a caring attitude, accountability, and citizenship.”

Junior Meredith Gallagher was enrolled in cotillion when she was in elementary school. There, she learned how to set a table, how to address respected elders, and how to dance. She wore white gloves, which she remembers as being “terribly itchy.”

Junior Morgan Smith attended cotillion when she was 11 and 12. I asked her a few questions about her experience.

1. How would you describe cotillion to someone who’s never done it before?

Cotillion is where young boys and girls go to learn about etiquette rules and how to behave and move gracefully.

2. What did you learn there, and are any of the skills relevant today?

I learned how to sit properly (with ankles crossed and to the side when wearing a skirt or dress; which I still do to this day). I also learned some ball room dancing, but I do not remember much today because I did this when I was 11 and 12. One of the most important things that I learned and I use today still is how to use the proper utensils and in the correct order.

3. Why were you sent to cotillion?

My Mother enrolled me in cotillion because she thought that as a young lady these are things that will get you far in life and teach you to be proper.

4. Did any of the etiquette learned (or dances) seem outdated? How so?

From what I remember the dances I suppose were out dated, the only one I remember is the fox trot. But I feel that most ball room dancing is older, but that is what makes it so neat to learn because it does not change.

5. Was cotillion a family tradition for you?

Cotillion was not a family tradition, but my Mother thought that it would be a good life skill to have and I was excited to take it and get to get dressed up and wear the white gloves. To me it was like being in the Princess Diaries.

Debutante

Debutante balls were a way for wealthy eighteen-year-old (or around that age) girls to be "presented into society." The debutante balls were typically held around June (the ending of school) or September (the beginning of school) (*Vogue's Book*, p. 124). I also asked Dr. Elizabeth Pass about her perceptions of debutantes growing up in Texas.

Debutante was pretty big in Texas, but much bigger in the Southeast (Miss, Louisiana, Ala, Georgia, Ark, NC, SC).

I didn't get presented. It used to be called "coming out" but that, for obvious reasons, isn't what it's called anymore. When I was in high school it was not called coming out (that was starting to end), but called "being presented," as in "being presented into society," and you would go to a Presentation Ball or Gala.

Your mother had to be in the Women's Society in order to be a debutante/be presented, and my mother made a conscious decision not to join when asked when I was a child. She was climbing the ranks in her sorority and that required lots of travel and time commitment, and she knew she wanted to spend her time there and not with a local women's organization. She ended up on the national board of Tri Delta (Membership Director), and she traveled around the US and Canada deciding if a chapter would open on a campus or not. She was on the Board while I was in junior high and high school, so she was correct--she wouldn't have had the time for the Women's Club to get me sponsored as a deb.

Basically, the society women of a town/city, who usually have a club (where they do philanthropy work, etc.), get together once a year when the young society women of the town/city (usually their daughters) are coming of age (this is an archaic definition, so "coming of age" used to mean marrying age but now just corresponds with senior year in high school before all the young women leave for college) in order to "present them to society." Originally, this was so they could marry them off to the "right" men, but now it's basically to throw a high-society party and get your daughter's picture in the paper.

The tradition is that you have to wear all white and long gloves, which it still adhered to. Presentation means that there is an official "presenting" of the young women: everyone is at the gala, usually at a sit-down dinner w/ a dance floor and at some place in the room near the dance floor there is an arch/stage/entrance/etc. where each young woman, one at a time, will come in

w/ her date when she is announced by an official spokesperson. Thus, "presentation to society" - she is being presented (by announcing her name) to society (the people in the room are "society").

At this point, especially, in the southeast, she will step forward, and do the grand bow. We don't do that where I come from, but it's really big in some places. She puts her arms out to her sides (parallel to the floor), one foot behind the other (can't see this b/c she's in a long gown), bends her knees and waist then head into a deep bow. The deeper the bow, the better you are! It takes amazing skill, balance, practice.... Some can touch their forehead to the floor, keeping their arms out parallel to the floor, then come back up! All this is done slowly and gracefully, as if it is as easy as sitting in a chair.

Then, dinner and dancing. The papers of the town/city will carry the story with pictures, usually going into detail about each woman's date (and even his parent's names), and even describe the gown!

*And *that's* being presented. Not sad I missed it!*

College Girls

The good girl continued her education after high school to reach her full potential as wife and mother. "Utterly guileless and innocent in her virginal white commencement gown, the sweet girl graduate from either high school or college accepted her role as nurturer of men and children and used her education for the betterment of her future family" (Peril, 2006, p. 31). This meant going to college to study "laundry work, chamber work, table work, dishwashing, cooking, ironing, plain sewing, and other vocational sciences" (Peril, 2006, p. 193). I.e. home economics and domestic science. When colleges first became co-ed, an uproar erupted from the educated male upper class. They came up with numerous reasons as to why women should not go to college, including:

- Studying will destroy women's reproductive health
 - "Some doctors, most notably Edward H. Clarke in his best-selling Sex in Education, or a Fair Chance for the Girls (1873), claimed that the rigors of study during the menstrual period would destroy a woman's reproductive health...women shouldn't compete with men" (Peril, 2006, p. 43)
- It's a scam for women to meet men
 - "Indeed, many early coeds chafed at the oft-made suggestion that their [women's] interest in higher education was merely a frivolous attempt to meet men" (Peril, 2006, p. 44)
- Women should stick to women things, like homemaking

- "...women were best suited to home and hearth and men the outside world of work and business was the result of biological determinism that suggested such gender differences were innate, not the result of environmental factors." (Peril, 2006, p. 181)
- Women's brains are physically smaller, more closely related to apes than men
 - "Women's brains, they agreed, were about 10% smaller and lighter than men's" (Peril, 2006, p. 181)
- Why study a field she'll never enter, like science or politics? (Peril, 2006, p. 179)
- Men don't want their wives to be intellectuals (Peril, 2006, p. 211)

The trail blazing women who first went to college faced every obstacle imaginable from both the administration and educated males. In order to combat these negative stereotypes of women in college, female students deployed a clever tactic. "Emphasis on ladylike good manners at the early women's colleges helped counter arguments that higher education masculinized young women" (Peril, 2006, p. 99).

The administration also did their best to keep strict watch over young girls in college. In addition to curfew, "a small section on "Good Form" in the 1935-1936 freshman handbook at the coed Massachusetts State College presented general rules of etiquette, such as the necessity of replying to invitations, the proper way to make introductions, and that dinner invitations required prompt arrival" (Peril, 2006, p. 101). During the early 20th century, girls were told that they "...were responsible for controlling their date's sexuality...they are responsible for making sure things don't go too far" (Peril, 2006, p. 305). The tide was about to turn in the 1960s.

In the sexual revolution of the 1960s, curfew sparked creative methods of sneaking back in the dorm from a night with her boyfriend. The good girl could make freer choices about her sexuality. The 1960s was also the time were the sex kitten era began for college girls. Fantasies about professors and students sleeping together ran rampant. A book published in 1960 titled *Where the Boys Are* was one of the first to display the modern college girl. "Merrit (female protagonist) shows a stunning lack of remorse for her free-wheeling ways." This character and her friends went to Florida for spring break, slept around, got drunk and smoked. They did not adhere to what was considered proper, and instead, chose to live their life the way they wished. This was the beginning of a new age of college women: feminists.

The Good Girl Today

For the past few weeks, I have explored in depth rules and standards for how a good girl should act through the decades. I've seen trends come and go, and for the most part, I'm glad to see some of them go. A good girl is not prude or weak; she is a strong,

steadfast woman who knows what she wants, and will settle for nothing less. She is besotted with life. She radiates joy. She is compassionate. She is confident. She is effervescent. She is timeless. I've comprised my personal idea of what a good girl is today:

Boys

Good girls of the past were told to wait for a boy to ask them on a date. Today, we have the choice to ask a boy on a date or wait for him to, because we are human beings that have vocal chords. Girls no longer need her boyfriend to order for her or split the bill, because she has a job and can pay for herself. That's not to say chivalry is not appreciated; believe me it is. But we should do nice things for the boys also! People like people who surprise others with kindness. Girls are no longer meek and inferior to boys (but really, why were we even considered weak in the first place?) It is no longer necessary to frame the conversation about his interests. You have permission to say "no" when a boy asks you to dance (it takes two to tango after all, hehe). Good girls never let a man place limitations on her education and aspirations.

Body and Health

A good girl should be able to wear whatever she wants, because her clothes do not dictate her values. Good girls may choose to wear makeup, or not. Either choice is okay. Here's a few tips for when you wake up in the morning:

- Sit up in bed, and stretch.
- Walk over to the bathroom and look in the mirror.
- You see that?
- It's you.
- It's your face.
- You're perfect just as you are, and no amount of rules or standards of acting or looking should dictate how you feel about yourself.

Religion/Spirituality

Life is hard. People have different ways of coping with life's trials. People today are moving more towards spirituality rather than organized religion. Whether it's praying, meditating, or hiking, girls find positivity through whatever brings them solace. Spirituality takes the edge off life's serrations. And the best part is? No dress code required.

Manners

I learned it best from my mama. Manners involve being a nice person. A nice person will never be out of style. A nice person:

- Is considerate
 - Allows your roommate to eat the last taco, because she just worked out at the gym and is probably hungrier than you
- Does her share of chores
 - No one wants to take the trash out, but it needs to be done
- Is environmentally conscious
 - Knows how to separate her trash in Top Dog
- Is respectful
 - Not only to superiors and elders, but to peers and anyone she meets
- Offers to assist whenever she can
 - Dukes hold doors open for each other
- Is emotionally available
 - Always be a shoulder to cry on, a rock to hang on to, and a beacon to guide forward

I could write an entire book on what it means to be a nice person (mostly because it's been done before), but it all boils down to the Golden Rule: "do unto others what you would have done unto you."

College

I figured this would be a fitting section since we are all college ladies. Never forget that college is a gift that a majority of people don't have the privilege of experiencing. Learn the lesson early on in college that grades are important, but memories are sometimes more. A good girl knows how to balance her academics and social life so she can have a healthy balance of both. Good girls take advantage of all the resources offered to her, like services and office hours, and uses them to her benefit. Good girls are able to see the bigger picture, and to plan accordingly (but never adhere too strictly to the plan). College is the great experiment preparing you for life. You get knocked down constantly, but always strive to see the silver lining. Just ask "what's the next step?". Taking care of yourself mentally and physically will in turn help you academically and socially.

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