



## What Girls Are Good For: A Novel of Nellie Bly

*David Blixt*

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*"Dramatic, engrossing, and spirited, What Girls Are Good For takes the reader straight to the heart of an unsung American hero--a feminist icon whose voice rings loud and true. This is a must-read for anyone who loves an underdog and celebrates justice; the perfect accompaniment for our present times."* -

*Olivia Hawker, international bestselling author of The Ragged Edge of Night*

Nellie Bly has the story of a lifetime. But will she survive to tell it?

Enraged by an article entitled 'What Girls Are Good For', Elizabeth Cochrane pens an angry letter to the Pittsburgh Dispatch, never imagining a Victorian newspaper would hire a woman reporter. Taking the name Nellie Bly, she struggles against the male-dominated industry, reporting stories no one else will – the stories of downtrodden women.

Chased out of Mexico for revealing government corruption, her romantic advances rejected by a married colleague, Bly earns the chance to break into the New York's Newspaper Row if she can nab a major scoop – life inside a madhouse. Feigning madness, she dupes the court into committing her to the Insane Asylum on Blackwell's Island.

But matters are far worse than she ever dreamed. Stripped, drugged, beaten, she must endure a week of terror, reliving the darkest days of her childhood, in order to escape and tell the world her story. Only, at the end of the week, no rescue comes, and she fears she may be trapped forever...

Based on the real-life events of Nellie Bly's life and reporting, **What Girls Are Good For** is a tale of rage, determination, and triumph - all in the frame of a tiny Pennsylvania spitfire who refused to let the world tell her how to live her life, and changed the world instead.

Praise for **What Girls Are Good For**:

★★★★★ - *"With rich imagination and meticulous research, David Blixt has brought the hectic, exciting world of nineteenth-century journalism vividly to life. His Nellie Bly is determined, independent, crafty, irresistible -- a heroine any reader would be delighted to get to know."* - Matthew Goodman, New York Times bestselling author

★★★★★ - *"David Blixt pens a heroine for the ages in 'What Girls Are Good For,' which follows the extraordinary career of pioneer newspaperwoman Nellie Bly. A pint-sized dynamo who refuses to stay in the kitchen, Nellie fights tooth and nail to make a name for herself as a journalist, battling complacent men, corrupt institutions, and her own demons along the way. This real-life Lois Lane had me cheering aloud as I turned the pages - simply a delight!"* - Kate Quinn, author of The Alice Network

## What Girls Are Good For: A Novel of Nellie Bly Details

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# **From Reader Review What Girls Are Good For: A Novel of Nellie Bly for online ebook**

## **Stephanie says**

Elizabeth Cochrane has always been seen as a troublemaker, questioning why things are the way they are and standing up for what she believed was right. As an adult, Lizzie takes a stand after a newspaper column by the Quiet Observer defames women. After writing a reply to the column, Elizabeth is hired by the Pittsburgh Dispatch for her unique point of view. Given the pseudonym Nellie Bly, she quickly used her new found skills to tell the stories of women's issues that were not often discussed including poverty, divorce and the stories of factory girls. Nellie eventually finds herself in Mexico then New York to write the story of a lifetime after committing herself to an asylum.

I have of course heard the name Nellie Bly and her legacy, but never knew her whole story. Written with historical accuracy and the ability to dive into Nellie's head, Nellie's story is heartfelt, intriguing and raw. Learning about how Nellie grew up, I was able to see what drove her to be impassioned to fight for women's rights and those who are underserved. Throughout the story Nellie's passion and spirited personality shown through. Going undercover with Nellie was a treat as I saw snippets of factory life, Mexico City and the asylum through her eyes. I enjoyed being able to read her articles as well as how they came to be. I also was impressed by how many times Nellie was met by failure and still persisted, a lesson that still endures for many women today. Nellie Bly not only persisted, she learned, grew and honed her talent in order to become a better reporter. Overall, an intense story of one of the groundbreaking women in journalism.

This book was received for free in return for an honest review.

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## **Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says**

**Have you heard of Nellie Bly? That spitfire of a reporter important for catapulting women's rights? ??**  
?? ?? ??

Nellie Bly was born Elizabeth Cochrane in small-town Pennsylvania during the Victorian era. As an adult, she reads the article, "What Girls are Good For," which compels her to write a letter to the Pittsburgh Dispatch. Well, guess what? They paper hired her as a reporter, which was practically unheard of for women at the time.

Elizabeth changes her name to Nellie Bly and becomes a champion of the issues she finds most important, the plight of women.

Nellie Bly lives her life no-holds-barred. She does not hold back with what she thinks, and if there's a story to tell, she's going to uncover it.

Her biggest project comes when she pretends to be mentally ill so she can report on treatment inside an asylum. She's successful getting inside, but once there, she is overwhelmed with what she encounters. She is imprisoned for a week when she is supposed to be rescued, but no one comes.

Blixt provides a fascinating and riveting account of Bly's most adventurous and triumphant life. I think

everyone will be inspired by Nellie. She stops at nothing to uncover the wrongs in the world, and she uses her powerful voice for change. It's hard to wrap my head around how much she was able to accomplish at a time when women were not working outside the home unless it was in service. She chooses her own path and lives life exactly as she chooses.

Overall, Blixt's writing is a brilliant sorcery in this account of a brave and bold woman and her heroic actions.

Thank you to the author for the complimentary copy. All opinions are my own.

My reviews can also be found on my blog: [www.jennifertarheelreader.com](http://www.jennifertarheelreader.com)

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### **Kate Quinn says**

Read for a cover quote, which I was very happy to do! David Blixt pens a heroine for the ages in "What Girls Are Good For," which follows the extraordinary career of pioneer newspaperwoman Nellie Bly. A pint-sized dynamo who refuses to stay in the kitchen, Nellie fights tooth and nail to make a name for herself as a journalist, battling complacent men, corrupt institutions, and her own demons along the way. This real-life Lois Lane had me cheering aloud as I turned the pages - simply a delight.

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### **Lauralee says**

Nellie Bly is one of America's most famous journalists. Many strong female characters such as Lois Lane, Lana Winters, and Maggie Dubois were all based on her. The novel *What Girls Are Good For* chronicles the early years of her life. After reading a newspaper article where it patronizes women's daily lives, Nellie Bly writes a scathing letter to the newspaper about the hardships of womanhood. This impresses their editor, and he hires Nellie to write an article on the average woman. Happy with her assignment, Nellie wants to investigate the life of an average working woman. This is the first of many of Nellie's strange adventures.

Nellie is a delightful and charming character. She is spirited and idealistic. She is bold, witty, and confident. She has a taste for adventure. She loves to go undercover and write about her experiences. However, I really like the part in the novel where Nellie feigns madness to get into the asylum. This is where we see Nellie at her most vulnerable and her insecure. However, it is through these experiences that Nellie becomes a stronger fighter and a wiser person.

Overall, this novel is about passion, beliefs, and inner strength. I thought all the characters were very realistic, and I loved how the author portrayed a male-dominated world that is baffled by an unconventional woman. The story is fast-paced and will draw you in with the first few pages. The only thing I did not like about this book was that there were some unnecessary and drawn-out scenes. However, I am excited for the sequel! *What Girls Are Good For* is a novel that you will want to read again! I recommend this for fans of *Madame Presidentess*, *Falling Angels*, and *Emmy Nation: Undercover Suffragette*.

(Note: This book was given to me as part of a blog tour in exchange for an honest review.)

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## **Serisop (Cioccolatoelibri) says**

Bellissima lettura quella di "A cosa servono le ragazze" di David Blixt, una totale immersione nella vita di una donna che ha rivoluzionato il mondo del giornalismo investigativo.

Nellie Bly - che avevo già conosciuto in "Dieci giorni in manicomio", ha combattuto da sempre per i suoi diritti di donna e per essere ritenuta degna di lavorare, arrivando poi a intraprendere la carriera di giornalista. Dalle prime battaglie con i fratelli e la famiglia, fino alla decisione di farsi internare in manicomio per indagare sulle condizioni dei pazienti, David Blixt ci racconta la vita di una persona che ha tanto da insegnare a tutti noi.

Quando il femminismo non aveva ancora un nome, moltissime donne lottavano per essere considerate. Ho adorato questo libro non solo per la trama interessante, ma anche per lo stile in cui il tutto viene raccontato. Non mi sono annoiata mai!

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## **Amy Bruno says**

2018 has shaped up to be one of the best years of reading that I can remember! I don't even know how I'm going to narrow it down to my favorite reads of the year but I do know that What Girls are Good For will be on it!

As I was finishing up reading What Girls are Good For last night all I could think of was just how I was going to write a review worthy of this amazing book. Since that's impossible I'll just tell you about how much I loved it!

I was absolutely blown away by David Blixt's novel of Nellie Bly -- a woman before her time, a woman that defied expectations and challenged the status quo of women, a woman after my own heart! She had a big mouth, a big heart, and big ambitions, and I adored her instantly.

If you know David or follow him online you know he is a great advocate for women and that shines through in the book. In my opinion, I've not found many male authors that can write women well, particularly a woman like Nellie, but David is the exception.

Historical authors are tasked with bringing important figures from history to life and David did just that with Nellie Bly, and brilliantly I might add. I think he did her proud!

Do yourself a favor and pick this up soon! Be prepared to fall in love with Nellie!

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## **CoffeeandInk says**

I hope the author is going to continue writing about Nellie Bly and the world she lived in. A fantastic story told by a phenomenal historical fiction author. I had a hard time putting this book down!

Deeply offended by a column written in her local newspaper, one that claims girls are only good for marriage and raising children, Nellie fights back with her pen. She's observed her own mother suffering beneath the boot of her husband, beneath the boot of society that keeps her ever on the edge of poverty. Nellie's reply is passionate and appeals to the editor of the newspaper and eventually she is given a job as a reporter. But she

has only begun fighting. Her spirited approach to every battle keeps the narrative rolling without becoming sentimental, from the lives of factory girls, “mashing” male reporters, the Mexican police, and the evil nurses at the Blackwell asylum. The story is realistically told, the research meticulous, with deeper insights into the crusading nature of Nellie Bly.

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### **Meg - A Bookish Affair says**

4.5 stars. There are historical fiction books that introduce you to people that you can't believe you didn't know about before. There are other historical fiction books where you can't believe the subject isn't one that has been visited before. This book is the latter. This book is a thoughtful, vibrant send up of an amazing woman. Blixt makes Nellie jump off the page and had me wondering how on earth it took someone so long to give her such a great historical fiction treatment!

Nellie Bly has always been fascinating to me. Here was a woman truly before her time. She became an investigative journalist at a time where the whole investigative journalism genre was still quite nascent. She became a journalist at a time where women were generally expected to stay home. She went against the grain and wrote amazing pieces that showed the dark underbelly of things that the general public had little awareness of. This book dives into all of her greatest feats and how she went about doing her work.

I was particularly interested in the level of detail that the author infused in this book. Nellie's world changes a lot throughout this book. I loved how the author included some of the newspaper articles surrounding the events of the book. It was so interesting seeing how the things Nellie went through were covered (like the whole mental hospital episode - fascinating!!!).

Nellie is such a great character! I loved getting to meet her all over again in this book! I definitely recommend this book!

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### **Ruth Chatlien says**

I've wanted to know more about pioneering journalist Nellie Bly for a long time, so when I learned that David Blixt had written a novel about her, I snapped it up. It's an engrossing tale, full of a young woman's rage against injustice and detailing the adventures Nellie Bly gets into because of that fury. The story about how she investigated an insane asylum in New York makes the last section of the novel nearly impossible to put down. I recommend this book without reservation.

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### **Valery Tikappa says**

Pochi libri mi lasciano turbata, infastidita e con lo stomaco sottosopra come "A cosa servono le ragazze", ma abbiamo bisogno anche e soprattutto di libri del genere.

Quando ho saputo dell'uscita di questo libro sapevo che avrei dovuto leggerlo: la storia della prima (dopo mille difficoltà) giornalista investigativa del mondo, femminista, che addirittura si finse pazza per entrare in manicomio e raccontare di ciò che accadeva, non poteva essere ignorata.

E ho fatto bene!

La storia di Nellie è sconvolgente perchè è ambientata a fine '800 ma anche e soprattutto perchè i ragionamenti che vengono espressi dalla prosa metodica e completa di Blixt sono incredibilmente -e in alcuni casi disgustosamente- attuali. La ragazza, che non ha intenzione di sposarsi e aver figli, vuole soltanto vivere la propria vita secondo i suoi personali canoni, lavorando, mantenendo la propria indipendenza ed autonomia e, perchè no, anche innamorandosi.

Nel periodo in cui Nellie vive, però, le cose non sono così semplici, e i giudizi arrivano aspri. Giudizi provenienti da chiunque, dal mondo degli affetti a quello lavorativo; ma è qui che Nellie sboccia e, in un mondo creato a misura di uomini, si fa valere in quanto essere umano.

La sua determinazione nel far rispettare le proprie idee e la propria persona sono le cose che più mi hanno colpito della storia di Blixt. Nellie si crea un mestiere e lo svolge al massimo, e nel farlo indaga su strani casi, viaggia in Messico e ne scopre la corruzione, parla di cultura, e, infine, arriva in un manicomio.

Già di per sè non proprio un libro facile, quando il lettore entra con Nellie in manicomio ha bisogno di uno stomaco forte per leggere di ciò che accade.

Le descrizioni delle condizioni in cui le donne -non tutte malate, anzi!- dell'epoca vivevano nella struttura, la poca empatia delle figure di potere, la crudeltà, l'indifferenza e l'assenza di rispetto con cui quelle donne venivano trattate mi hanno dato il voltastomaco.

Il velo di normalità che la società ha cercato di mantenere, separando il "normale" dal sempre "diverso" in Nellie Bly crolla, e fa male, perchè si parla di qualcosa di terribilmente attuale, problematizzando i pensieri, le azioni e le intenzioni con cui le persone agiscono.

È un libro crudo che non si limita a raccontare della grandezza di una donna ma anche a mettere in luce tutto ciò che non va nella società di allora e di ora, raccontato in uno stile romanzato che si prende il suo tempo senza essere lento.

La caratterizzazione dei personaggi è sublime, a partire da Nellie fino ad arrivare ai personaggi secondari e alle comparse, e sebbene non sia un libro di piccola mole non sono riuscita a posarlo. Blixt ha avuto fra le mani una grande eredità e ne ha fatto una grande storia, una sorta di biografia raccontata chiaramente e senza indorare la pillola, che comunque mi ha conquistata fino all'ultima pagina.

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## **Gina says**

It would be pretty much impossible to come up with enough superlatives to describe this David Blixt book regarding the infamous Nellie Bly, a woman who stood up for rights when women were expected to only stand up at a kitchen sink, a woman who put herself willingly in perilous situations in order to enlighten her readers about the injustices that were being committed - and routinely ignored - all around them, a woman whose courage cannot be understated.

Focusing on her early years, this book tells the story of how Nellie Bly came to be. Elizabeth Cochrane in real life, she was infuriated after reading an article in the Pittsburgh Dispatch entitled "What Girls Are Good For". Penning an angry reply, she has no clue what changes her reply will bring to her life.

No newspaper in those Victorian years hired female reporters. Women couldn't handle it. Women belonged in the home. The men would be uncomfortable around women reporters - they wouldn't be able to cuss and act normal, etc. Eventually Elizabeth Cochrane, writing as Nellie Bly, becomes the first female reporter. At first she is given exactly what you would expect - covering fashion, elite society, and the like - none of which interested her.

She fights hard to be taken seriously. She convinces her boss to let her go to Mexico (her mother will go with her, much to her dismay - but safety is first) to bring to light what really is happening there. The trip takes



months, and she runs afoul of government officials and must return quickly, where she reports exactly what is going on. Women loved her - although a few found her unfeminine and manly, a woman who didn't know her place. Men didn't know what to think.

The biggest story is when she fakes being insane in order to be admitted to a horrific insane asylum with rumors of extreme abuse. What she goes through in 10 days is nothing short of torture. Because of her bravery, the abusers are held accountable by a court of law, and her articles bring her fame and fortune. The women who were abused are removed and taken care of. No more icy cold baths, no more windows open all winter with no appropriate clothing, no more rancid food, no more hard beds, no more bruises and worse.

This is one of those books that will stay with you. Thanks to people like the brave Nellie Bly, women began to make strides with regards to their rights as equal human beings to the powerful men.

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## **Clarissa says**

When I was a little girl, I had a book called 'Herstory', which highlighted women in history who were badass, bluntly put, and who seemed to get the short end of the stick. It had all different women, from Cleopatra to Carry Nation to Frida Kahlo and many others. If I could ever find it again, I'd buy it in a hot minute because I adore reading about women in history. Included was Nellie Bly. Nellie was way ahead of her time and I was thoroughly intrigued as a little girl, about this woman who was sick of the patriarchy and their rules that had women repressed and stuck at home, waiting for a husband. She didn't believe that a woman's sole purpose in life should be to bear children. It wasn't something she wanted for herself and I was glad to read about it.

David Blixt has taken up the mantle and has written this novel from Nellie's POV. Now, I know some of you are thinking, 'why is a man writing a woman's story?' I assure you, it is well done and is extremely thoughtful. I would truly have believed Nellie was writing the book herself. It is very clear that Mr. Blixt studied her writing well because he writes in her voice perfectly.

Nellie Bly is a pseudonym for Elizabeth Cochrane, who is known as a 'troublemaker'. To those of us who have read about her, she is ahead of her time. She reads a piece in the local paper that sends her absolutely on edge and she writes a response. It leads her to get a job there and beginning her very illustrious career. What she is most especially known for is what is covered, her infiltrating an asylum and documenting the mistreatment of women, Mexico City as well as factory life. She took on Women's Rights before it was the 'cool' thing to do, essentially and what an impact. Yet, she remains largely unappreciated. This book--and the others that are coming out this coming year--are finally shining a light on the 'troublemaker' herself.

I highly recommend this book. It is big, but it is worth the time it'll take you to read it. I was in a bit of a slump, but this grabbed my attention. The attention to the time period, the locales, the story, and everything...it's exceptional. I really give Mr. Blixt his props for this. You all know how I adore a well-researched book.

You know how Senator Elizabeth Warren said earlier this year, "Nevertheless, she persisted?" Nellie Bly is the embodiment of that.

Now. Go. Go read this.

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## **David Chazan says**

Nellie Bly was possibly the world's first under-cover, investigative journalist - both male or female - and her story is well worth investigating through this intense biographical, historical fiction novel "What Girls are Good For: A Novel of Nelly Bly" by David Blixt.

<https://tcl-bookreviews.com/2019/01/1...>

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## **Patricia says**

### **A fascinating account**

I received this book free from one of the book sites. I do not remember which one! This is my honest and voluntary review.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. Being a fictional account with many true articles, this is Nellie Bly as never read. One of the best books I've read this year!

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## **Margaret says**

There were two factors that made me want to read this book. First, the author. I've seen his books around in the circle of historical fiction authors, in fact, I met him once back in Denver when he did a masterclass on sword fighting, with the real thing (how did he get those through airport security?). His novels in Ancient Rome are patiently waiting while I wind my way out of the 19th/20th-century interests of late. Which brings me to my 2nd reason, Nellie Bly is a woman I've heard of but know nothing about. This is my kind of reading - entertaining and educational at the same time. I love reading about women in history, I was going to say strong women but they don't always start that way, it's a process, it's through their experiences that make them stronger - like Nellie Bly.

I knew right from the beginning I'd love this book. Elizabeth or rather Nellie is spunky, spontaneous and rather a hoot. You never knew what she'd do next, whether it be interviewing factory workers, heading off to Mexico or an Insane Asylum I was totally captivated. Through these experiences, Nellie has to change and that's what makes reading about her so interesting.

I love books that go deep, where not just the characters are developed nicely but the plot as well. I've found with some books this size that they could do with fewer pages but in this case, I loved the length and detail. The characters are authentic, I was immersed in the era, the author's research definitely shined through here.

What Girls Are Good For is a story of perseverance, standing up for what you believe in and an example of never giving up.

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